Sakutarō Hagiwara

Cat Town

TRANSLATED BY HIROAKI SATO

NYRB/POETS

SAKUTARŌ HAGIWARA (1886–1942) was born in Maebashi, Gunma, the eldest of six children. His father was a successful physician, and Hagiwara enjoyed a sheltered and pampered childhood. At age fifteen he discovered literature and began writing classical tanka verse and publishing in literary magazines. As a young student he moved frequently throughout Japan, unable to finish college, prone to illness, and tormented by youthful lust. In Tokyo, he learned to play the mandolin and guitar, and upon returning to his hometown founded a musicians' club called Gondola Western Music Society. By 1913, Hagiwara had abandoned classical metrical schemes in his poetry for free verse. He became a founding member of the Mermaid Poetry Society, worked as an editor at literary magazines, and in 1917 published his first book of poetry, Howling at the Moon, which was an immediate success and transformed modern Japanese verse forever. An arranged marriage in 1919 produced two daughters and ended ten years later with his wife eloping with her dance partner; a second marriage in 1938 lasted a year, again with his wife fleeing. His mother is quoted as saying, "He spent all his income from his writing on booze. He was good for nothing, but with all that drinking, he neither increased nor decreased the family money." After turning to essays and aphorisms for several years, Hagiwara eventually published his second poetry collection, Blue Cat, in 1923. These two books of poems—noted for their sensual philosophy, intimate gloom, symbolist imagery, riveting self-exploration, and confessions of vulgar secrets that blended the literary with the daily vernacular—marked the peak of Hagiwara's creative heights. Of his writing process, Hagiwara wrote to a friend, "I am merely catching a kind of rhythm that flows at the bottom of my heart and unconsciously pursuing the rhythm, therefore at the time of creation my own self is merely something like a half-conscious automatic machine." He would go on to write four more books of poems and prose poems, as well as other collections of essays. Hagiwara taught at Meiji University from 1934 until his death from pneumonia at the age of fifty-five.

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NEW YORK REVIEW BOOKS
New York

THIS IS A NEW YORK REVIEW BOOK
PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS
435 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014
www.nyrb.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Hagiwara, Sakutaro, 1886–1942.
[Poems. Selections. English]
Cat town / by Sakutaro Hagiwara ; translated and with an introduction by Hiroaki Sato.
1 online resource. — (New York Review Books poets) Description based on print version record and CIP data provided by publisher; resource not viewed.
ISBN 978-1-59017-804-1 () — ISBN 978-1-59017-775-4 (alk. paper)
1. Hagiwara, Sakutaro, 1886–1942—Translations into English. I. Sato, Hiroaki, 1942- translator. II. Title.
PL808.A35
895.61'4—dc23
2014028376

Cover design by Emily Singer

ISBN 978-1-59017-804-1
v1.0

For a complete list of books in the NYRB/Poets series, visit www.nyrb.com or write to:
Catalog Requests, NYRB, 435 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014

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CAT TOWN (1935)

INTRODUCTION

SAKUTARŌ HAGIWARA was born on November 1, 1886, the first son of a prosperous physician in Maebashi, Gunma. Today, Maebashi honors Hagiwara with his own museum, but the poet himself seems to have been unable to entertain any positive feeling about his birthplace. In an early poem, "The Metropolis and the Countryside," he complained, "Here there's no civilization, / here there's nothing human." Toward the end of his life he wrote a short essay entitled "A Hometown Poet as a Stranger" and in it described Gunma as a "barren, barbarous blank-paper zone utterly devoid of any cultural tradition." Still, Maebashi was close enough to Tokyo for him to visit as he pleased, though far enough for him to yearn for "the Metropolis"—until he finally moved there to live.

Traditionally, the first son enjoys most of the family's attention in Japan, but in Hagiwara's case the pampering was more than usual. As his brother Yaroku recalled, once, when Hagiwara stubbornly clutched his friend's music box and wouldn't let it go, a relative was dispatched to Yokohama to buy one of these expensive imports for him. In bad weather he was taken to school in his father, Mitsuzō's, jinrikisha.

Mitsuzō's comfortable income supported such indulgence, but Hagiwara's mother, Kei, was its real source. Her pampering and influence remained so strong that various elements in Hagiwara's life and work cannot be considered without them. As a comical example, his poet friend Fuji Tada (1883–1968) recalled how, once while they were staying at an inn, Hagiwara went about wearing his *tabi* socks improperly so that a maid would feel compelled to help him adjust them—prompting Tada to guess that at home his friend's mother must have always helped him put them on.

More significantly, in the poem "Rooster" Hagiwara equated "mother" with "lover," and in the essay "Marriage Under Surveillance," he argued—with a straight face no doubt, considering many a sermon he wrote for women—that a woman, newly married or otherwise, could enjoy sex and other marital intimacies better when she was aware of her mother-in-law's "mean, watchful eye peering from behind the sliding paper door." Although he seems to have maintained a surly defiance of the father whose money supported him until his death, he remained submissive to his mother while at the same time fearful of her, according to his daughter Yōko's recollections. Little wonder then that his

first marriage collapsed when his wife, Ineko, eloped with her partner in the dance parties he gave in his house, and his second ended when his wife, Mitsuko, who was twenty-six years younger, decided not to live with him just a year after they wedded.

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Hagiwara began by writing poems in the 5-7-5-7-7-syllable tanka form, sometimes described as the world's oldest verse form in continuous use. He was first drawn to it in 1901, he said, when the poet Akiko Yosano (1878–1942) published *Midare-gami* (Hair in Disorder), a collection of tanka unabashedly extolling a woman's sexual desire and fantasy, which became a national sensation. The following year a set of five tanka were printed in Hagiwara's school magazine, marking his first publication. He wrote in this form for more than ten years before switching to *shi*—"poems" as distinct from tanka, haiku, and *kanshi* (verse in Chinese)—and even served as the tanka editor for a local newspaper.

Though he stopped writing tanka in the early 1910s, Hagiwara kept up a lively interest in the form. After his reputation as a writer of *shi* was established, he frequently challenged tanka poets to debate, and they responded. He often analyzed tanka in discussing Japanese prosody. In 1931 he compiled an anthology of classical tanka on love. Judging from what he had to say in "The Relationship Between Poetry and Music," he thought, toward the end of his life, that the tanka was the ideal verse form for the Japanese language.

Still, most of his tanka are undistinguished, including the more than four hundred pieces in *Sorairo no hana* (The Cerulean Flower)—a handwritten edition of one evidently made for a young woman with whom he was in love. (It was not discovered until the late 1970s when the publication of a fourth, fifteen-volume series of his complete works was nearing its completion.) The best of them are strongly reminiscent of Yosano, Takuboku Ishikawa (1886–1912), who famously broke up the tanka into three lines, and the versatile poet Hakushū Kitahara (1885–1942).

Nonetheless, a few examples may be cited to show how Hagiwara experimented with the form. He was writing at a time when the traditional syllabic units of five and seven and their combinations were quickly being abandoned in favor of "free verse" and what constituted a "line" in free verse continued to be debated.

Initially, Hagiwara followed the convention of not breaking up the form and not using any punctuation. One of his tanka from 1902 recalls some of the more famous pieces by Yosano:

> Lured by daybreak flowers I've come this slow path the people I meet slowly are all beautiful

In a series he published in 1903 he introduced punctuation without changing the one-line format:

> Face down in the grass the beautiful one doesn't stop weeping, I can't part, the field darkening.

The thirteen pieces for the group "A Flock of Birds," published in 1913 in the daily *Jōmō Shimbun* for which he was the tanka editor, are all in three lines, à la Ishikawa, except for two in four lines. One of the three-liners reads:

> At times taking a day off from school
> soaked in tears
> I would walk in a Koide wood in those days.

The tanka poet Yukitsuna Sasaki (b. 1938) has suggested that this tanka shows an obvious influence of Ishikawa, not just in lineation but because it is so close to Ishikawa's piece for the collection *Ichiaku no suna* (A Clutch of Sand), published in 1910:

> Escaping from a classroom window
> all alone
> I went to the castle ruins to take a nap

Some of the thirteen pieces employ hypersyllabic units. One of them goes:

> At times abruptly
> I throw away my sake cup and sob
> what a pity even mother thinks despite all.

The syllabic count of the original of this tanka is 5- / 8-5- / 9-7. Two months later, in a magazine, he published a variation—this time back in one-line form,

with a syllabic count of 5-7-5-8-7, and without punctuation:

> At times abruptly I throw away my sake-cup and sobbing watch the sleeping face of the mother I love

Indeed, Hagiwara, for all his experiments, seems to have gone back to where he started, concluding in the end that the tanka is a one-line poem, a belief shared by the great majority of tanka writers in Japan. Sasaki, born in a tanka house, as it were, even has a collection called *Chokuritsu seyo ichigyō no Shi* (Stand Up Erect, One-Line Poems)—erect because Japanese is normally written vertically. Tatsuhiko Ishii (b. 1952), who often incorporates phrases from foreign-language writings verbatim in his tanka, has flatly said that "the tanka can only be a one-line poem."

Hagiwara's interest in another traditional verse form, the haiku, came later and he wrote only about thirty pieces. But that interest led to his 1936 book on the haiku poet Yosa Buson (1716–83), which, along with his 1935 essay on the tanka poet Princess Shikishi (d. 1201), deserves the critical esteem Hagiwara won for his appreciation of the two poets. Here is a sample of Buson's haiku followed by Hagiwara's commentary:

> *Buson*:
> A squid-shaped kite: where yesterday's sky used to be
>
> *Commentary*: In the wintry sky where a northerly wind blows, a kite is up. In the same wintry sky, yesterday, too, it was up. The dreary season of winter. The wind blowing through a frozen dull sunlight, screaming sadly. The glassy cold blue sky. Up in that blue sky was a lonely kite yesterday, as it is today. Buzzing nonchalantly, boundlessly high, sorrowing in the globular sky, there's always a single distant memory drifting!
>
> In the poesy of this haiku is revealed the most Buson-like nostalgia and romance. Pay attention to the fact that all the poetic qualities are contained in the deep emotion of the expression "where yesterday's sky used to be." Yesterday's sky is no longer today's sky. Yet in that different sky the same kite is up, as always. In other words, in the space always changing, in the time always passing, a single kite—an image of memory—exists in the globular sky constantly, sadly, desolately. Viewed this way, this haiku, philosophically representing Buson's leitmotif as it does, contrasts with Bashō's famous "An old pond."

> I should add that attention should also be paid to the fact that the locution, "where yesterday's sky used to be," is wholly a symbolist technique shared by the poetry of modern Europe and that it is a distinct feature with no precedent in the Japanese literature of the past. Buson's mystery is that he, like today's poets, had a European lyrical method, born though he was in the Edo period when there was no intercourse with foreign countries.

During his tanka-writing period Hagiwara moved from his native Maebashi to Kumamoto, then to Okayama, and finally to Tokyo, showing an increasing inability to complete school. Prone to illness and tormented by youthful lust, he more than once considered suicide rather than face the prospect of continuing academic failures. As far as academic matters go, it is an irony not infrequent in the world of literature that Hagiwara, who would go on to become one of the most important poets in Japan, continued to fail Japanese language class. The poet Tatsuji Miyoshi (1900–64), a self-appointed disciple of Hagiwara, used to correct his master's misspellings, he wrote, whenever he took his manuscript from his house to the publisher.

His father's wealth, in any case, was sufficient to permit Hagiwara to live in Tokyo without any definite goal for nearly three years. He was in his mid-twenties at that time and was quick to make use of his opportunities. Of the many concerts and stage productions he attended, such as one of *A Doll's House*, he reported his impressions to his sister Yuki in lengthy letters. While in Tokyo, he also learned to play the mandolin and guitar and upon his return to his hometown founded a musicians' club called Gondola Western Music Society. Hagiwara was its conductor.

In early 1913 he read some poems by Saisei Muro'o (1889–1962) in *Zamuboa* and wrote a fan letter. In May, that magazine, edited by Hakushū Kitahara, printed five of his poems. Hagiwara had published *shi* before then, but the publication in *Zamuboa* meant recognition in Tokyo and by a renowned poet. It also marked the beginning of the most intense, productive, and inspired period in his life as a poet.

Early the next year Hagiwara became acquainted with such poets as Kōtarō Takamura (1883–1956), Takuji Ōte (1887–1934), and Bochō Yamamura (1884–1924). In June, he, along with Muro'o and Yamamura, set up the Ningyo Shisha, "Mermaid Poetry Society," to study poetry, religion, and music. In September he became a contributing editor of Kitahara's new magazine, *Chijō*

junrei (Pilgrimage on Earth), and a contributing member of another, begun by Tokujirō Oyama (1889–1963), *Itan* (Heresy). That year—the year when the Great War broke out in Europe—Hagiwara emerged as a poet of considerable power.

In March 1915 the Mermaid Poetry Society issued a monthly called *Takujō funsui* (Desktop Fountain). During this period many literary magazines that had somewhat noisily launched disappeared quietly after a brief spell. *Desktop Fountain* was no exception. About its scant three issues, however, a few things may be noted. According to Muro'o, one of its three editors, Hagiwara wanted a Reuters dispatch printed verbatim on the first page of the second issue—a dispatch saying that because of the war, Kaiser Wilhelm II's hair had precipitously grayed and he looked emaciated. This was novel enough to discomfit Muro'o, though it no doubt gave an outlandish, stylish air to their magazine. The magazine also printed poems of Ariake Kanbara (1875–1952), a symbolist poet devoted to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, though he was by then in semi-retirement because of the abuses his latest book had taken; Yūgure Maeda (1883–1951), a tanka poet who helped Hagiwara publish his first book of poems two years later; and Kōnosuke Hinatsu (1890–1970), a professor of English and poet who was to pronounce memorably, "Hagiwara has no literary training, that's the fellow's strength more than anything else."

During the first half of 1915 alone, Hagiwara wrote and published as many poems as he had throughout the previous year. But in June he suddenly stopped writing poems, telling Kitahara, "Let the one called Hagiwara Sakutarō be a poet who will never make poems again." The announcement obviously disturbed Kitahara, but Hagiwara did not clarify the reason for his decision. However, from a series of delirious letters written to Kitahara (which Hagiwara said were "love letters," in one calling his friend "mother far more than my blood relation [mother]"), it is evident that Hagiwara's poetically productive period, which lasted about two years, had corresponded to a period of mental disorder that peaked in the spring of 1915. He wrote Kitahara a card:

> Yesterday, I nearly breathed my last, it was a painful day indeed, because I went on a binge the day before yesterday the usual disease (of the nervous system) surfaced, my, this disease is exactly the same as [Vsevolod] Garshin the writer of *The Red Flower* was afflicted with, I clearly see and hear with indescribable terrible memories the lips of a faintly white woman who laughed after copulation and my abominable act

and language that I uttered while drunk, each time I have the terrible pain that seems to tear up my nerves, because I dashed my head against a column many times yesterday it still hurts this morning, I even thought I was going mad.

This was followed by a year of silence. Then he wrote to Maeda to say, "I discovered my own god." Yet, as he soon began exchanging lengthy letters with a fellow poet in Maebashi, Genkichi Takahashi (1883–1965), to discuss Christianity, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, Hagiwara admitted, "I am after all exactly what I was, far from being saved I am in a much more painful hell." He was, in fact, never free of various forms of mental affliction until his death; but few episodes were as intense or as conducive to poetry as those during the two years from 1913 to 1915.

It was through his association with Muro'o, Kitahara, Yamamura, and others, however, that Hagiwara found the true nature of his own poetry. His initial conception of poetry was likely to have been close to what he expressed in his tanka, such as *The Cerulean Flower*—what is sometimes described as tankaesque lyric romanticism. So he was drawn to Muro'o, who wrote poems such as "Rain over the Dune":

Over the dune the sound of rain fades
The grass is hushed
The sea is hushed
Delicate memories of summer
Are faint in me
I touch the grass and the grass is blue
I touch the rain and the rain is blue
Am I to leave your name buried in the dune
Or memories of summer that passed in vain
The clump of beach grass is a nest of melancholy
A gull's egg, unhatched
Has rotted in bright light

Hagiwara was then drawn to Bochō Yamamura's approach, as in "Great Imperial Edict":

Headhair wire
joining platinum hands

separating from the platinum hands
a smoldering cigarette.
From the eye of a silverfish on the table
aiming at a woman's navel
spouting fountain
oh no one knows
shining in heaven a nosetip
silverfish eye
making a red cup dance.

Yamamura's method probably gave Hagiwara the idea of projecting images as he saw them in his mind. But he soon found Yamamura unsatisfactory, too, calling him "pretentious." Yes, the images Yamamura spelled out were "prismatic"—his book with the poem cited above was published in 1915 with the title *Sei Hari* (Sacred Prism)—but they were perfunctory, merely playful.

In February 1917 Hagiwara funded the publication of his first book of poems, *Tsuki ni hoeru* (Howling at the Moon).* The book was an immediate success. Most of the well-known poets and other reviewers for major newspapers praised it, so that less than two months after the publication Hagiwara thought of a second printing. The unusual arrangement of publishing Kitahara's extravagant preface in a leading newspaper one month before the book came out doubtlessly contributed to its success; so too probably the news that two poems—"Love-Pity" and "The One Who's in Love with Love"—were deleted on order of the Home Ministry for "disturbing social customs." (The incident, which happened on February 21, 1917, six days after the book's appearance, was one of the many things that made Hagiwara feel a special affinity with Baudelaire. The two poems were restored in the second edition, five years later.)

But the main thing was the collection itself. Two aspects of it, in particular, were riveting: language and imagery. The language was such that Hagiwara was not exaggerating when he called it "epoch-making" in his preface to the second edition. A collection of poems written at a time when literary diction had largely been replaced by everyday language, it blended the two and the effect was unsettling enough to make Kōtarō Takamura—whose 1914 *Dōtei* (Journey) was, by general agreement, the first to exploit daily language in poetry—judge that Hagiwara opened the way to a use of language in which

"poetry appears concretely in words themselves."

But the language would have had little force without the imagery. Of this Hagiwara was well aware. Instead of placing his overtly romantic pieces first, he opened the book with a cluster of poems with powerful images, beginning with:

> At the bottom of the ground a face emerging,
> a lonely invalid's face emerging.

This set the tone. The book had some abstract pieces and some descriptive of homely things, but what was striking was the unadorned projection of images contemplated by an "invalid fearful of diseases," as Hagiwara approvingly quotes his friend Fuji as saying. Ariake Kanbara distinctly remembered a quarter century afterward the "effect of taut nerves" that the book had on him, adding, "That impression still remains and hasn't faded at all." The best poems in it have continued to surprise readers with their power to suggest without stating anything definite. Recognizing this quality, Ōgai Mori (1862–1922), the surgeon general of the army who was also an indefatigable guide to European literature, described *Howling at the Moon* as "true symbolist poetry written in Japanese for the first time."

Throughout 1917 and into early 1918 Hagiwara continued to publish. Then, for about forty months, he virtually stopped writing poetry. Instead, he turned to writing two types of prose: one consisting of discussions of poetry, and the other of pieces on a wide variety of subjects. His poetry criticism was initially planned as a book soon after *Howling at the Moon*, but it had to wait ten years to take its final form and see publication with the title *Shi no genri* (The Poetic Principles). Hagiwara chose to call the second type of prose "aphorisms" and published his first collection of them as *Atarashiki yokujō* (New Lust) in 1922.

This period marked a turning point in Hagiwara's literary career. In his preface to *New Lust* he noted that if his "lyrics" represented him as a poet, his aphorisms represented him as a thinker—Hagiwara was a dedicated reader of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer—and he continued to insist that "the poet and the critic of civilization (that is, thinker) are always thought to be *synonyms*." But his major creative period as a poet would shortly end with the publication in January 1923 of his second book of poems, *Aoneko* (Blue Cat). After that, Hagiwara the prose writer became increasingly productive, and Hagiwara the poet had to be content with mainly talking about poetry, not writing it.

Why he was unable to keep up his poetry writing is explained in his own preface to *Howling at the Moon*: "Poetry is the intellect's product of one second. A certain type of sentiment that one ordinarily has touches something like electricity and for the first time discovers a rhythm. This electricity is, for the poet, a miracle. Poetry is not something anticipated and made." And he explained how he wrote poems in a letter to Genkichi Takahashi:

> Toward my own poems, at the time of creating them I am nearly blind and myself don't even know what sort of thing I am singing of. What thought, what sentiment I myself have, what sort of thing I myself am attempting to write, I am utterly carried away. I am merely catching a kind of rhythm that flows at the bottom of my heart and unconsciously pursuing the rhythm, therefore at the time of creation my own self is merely something like a half-conscious automatic machine.

Of course, anyone who looks at Hagiwara's manuscripts bearing his many revisions will not associate his poems with automatic writing. But no one can question that he was, strictly speaking, an "inspirational" poet. And he did not try to broaden his method, either. Further, the poetic theory he developed and espoused tended to narrow his scope, not expand it.

For example, in "Intellect and Emotion," an essay contained in *Shijin no shimei* (The Poet's Mission), published in 1937, he wrote, "To be described as having no lyricism is fatal to a poet." And in another essay in the same book, "Toward the Idea of Genuine Poetry," he asserted that poetry in "the strict sense" did not exist "except in lyrics." In yet another essay, "Discussing the Essence of Poetry in Response to Mr. Yukio Haruyama," he said, "I haven't changed a bit since days past, having walked the main road of genuine lyric poetry with consistency from beginning to end." In truth, he had no other road, and his had reached a dead end a long time before. Haruyama, a poet who was particularly keen on developments in Europe, had accusingly written that Hagiwara was "a poet who had stopped making any progress."

If *Blue Cat* marked a virtual end to Hagiwara's creative period as poet, it also meant the publishing world's recognition of him as a marketable poet. Until then, not only such magazines as *Desktop Fountain* but also *Howling at the Moon* were privately financed. *Blue Cat*, in contrast, was put out by Shinchōsha, a commercial house, and the more than twenty books that followed were published by similar houses. Financially, this may have meant little to

Hagiwara, who, with his inherited income, would probably have done much of what he wanted to without commercial support. His daughter Yōko quoted his mother as saying, "He spent all the income from his writing on booze. He was good for nothing, but with all that drinking, he neither increased nor decreased the family money."

But in a country where a writer, once he achieves fame, has to expect to contend with never-ending requests for bits and pieces of writing, this meant, artistically, a progressive drain on Hagiwara's time, energy, and eventually on his intellect. Aside from the inevitable repetitiveness, most of the pieces in his last three collections of essays—*Nippon e no kaiki* (Turning Back to Japan**), in 1938, *Kikyōsha* (The Man Who Came Home), and *Atai* (Idiot), both published in 1940—may not have had to be written had it not been for the incessant demand for "filler" that is the curse of all established Japanese authors. One would not call those pieces trash. But many are of the kind that Hagiwara branded, in his fourth collection of aphorisms, *Minato nite* (At a Harbor), as "stupid literature scribbled without interest, pressed by journalistic demand and obligations."

Of Hagiwara's six books of poetry, the first two, *Howling at the Moon* and *Blue Cat*—of the latter, the first edition, the "definitive edition," published in 1936, is very different in selection and organization—are here translated in full. They were written at the height of his power and deserve full presentation in English.

The third book, *Chō o yumemu* (Dreaming of Butterflies), published half a year after *Blue Cat*, is a book of poems uncollected in his first two books plus eight reprints from them. *Junjō shōkyoku shū* (Collection of Short Songs on Innocent Love), published in 1925, consists of eighteen poems mostly written before those collected in *Howling at the Moon* and ten others written in 1924 and 1925. Those ten poems are composed in literary language—a "humiliating *retreat*," to use Hagiwara's phrase describing a similar but different "literary" diction employed throughout his fifth book, *Hyōtō* (The Iceland), published in 1934, in which some recent poet-critics such as Makoto Ōoka (b. 1932) find gems. *Shukumei* (Destiny), published in 1939, is a collection of prose poems written over a period of twenty years. Hagiwara had some hesitation in using the term "prose poem"; they were originally grouped with his aphorisms. I have made a small selection from these other books as well, concluding with a translation of *Nekomachi* (Cat Town), a "*roman* in the style of a prose poem,"

which Hagiwara published as an illustrated book in 1935.

There's a presumption made upon approaching Hagiwara's poetry that it is "musical." Among English commentators and translators, Donald Keene emphasized this point in his extended essay "Modern Japanese Poetry." So did Graeme Wilson, the first to translate a substantial number of Hagiwara's poems, imposing strict end rhymes. The main source for the presumption may well be Muro'o's famous encomium to Hagiwara which was placed as the afterword in the first edition of *Howling at the Moon*: "There has been no one, as far as I know, who gave as much attention to the *shades* and *depths* of the Japanese language as you did. . . . Aside from the fact that you were a musician yourself, you were one of the most advanced poets who turned the Japanese syllabaries into [piano] keys."

Muro'o was right to call attention to the "shades" and "depths" of language, the sensitivity to which is of course essential to every poet. But his equation of music and Hagiwara's language contrasted with Hagiwara's own earlier essay in which he, complimenting Muro'o's poetry, had warned against the "common folly" of confusing melodious verse with music:

> Through free verse form the poet has been able to freely discover the perfect *rhythm* [Hagiwara's English] of his ego for the first time. When it broke every unreasonable constraint and escaped from the bondage of music, poetry for the first time was able to discover its legitimate route and construct the "music of words" in the true sense.

"Rhythm" meant two things to Hagiwara. In the functional sense, rhythm in free verse was something as "natural" as that in daily conversation, he argued in "The Relationship Between Poetry and Music." In the "philosophical" sense (as noted earlier, he was a dedicated reader of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer), rhythm was the same as poetry, he said in "Talk on Rhythm," and he defined poetry, in turn, as any noticeable *sentiment* (his English). Since Hagiwara felt that a "sentiment" came as an "image," as he explained in "Rhythm in Free Verse," the poet's task was to express his subjective image as accurately as possible. Poetry was a "direct expression of music" only when the poet succeeded in projecting his *inner rhythm*, namely, his *vision*.

It is well known that Hagiwara, though fond of arguing, was poor at argument, and in his writings he often looks like a dog chasing his tail. Still, it

is clear that he neither regarded "music" in poetry as being mellifluous nor made his poems to create writings that "sound nice." His poems are in fact never as "musical" as, for example, Kitahara's, a fact of which he was aware rather early. Instead, they are studded with a variety of verbal infelicities that ought to be attributed largely to his effort to be true to his vision.

To cite some of the more conspicuous of such infelicities, one is the admixture of two types of diction, literary and everyday, within individual poems. "A Case of Murder," for instance, is written in everyday diction except for the third line from the end and the single word that follows: *haya hitori tantei wa urehi o kanzu. / miyo*. That the sudden shift is not made for mellifluous reading may be known by replacing *urehi o kanzu* ("feel melancholy") with *urehinu* ("feel sadness"). The other is so-called "translationese," which in Hagiwara's day carried with it an air of charm because of pervasive admiration for things Western. Hagiwara exclusively employs this manner of writing in "Two Long Poems," but his use of it is more prevalent than might be expected.

These and other verbal infelicities and oddities cannot be reproduced well in another language, and in that sense alone, Hagiwara is a difficult poet to translate. But to smooth them out in the name of "music" or readability would do injustice to what Hagiwara tried to do. On the contrary, by staying close to his original, much of his poetry comes across in translation, I believe, because it is realized through singular and precise images.

In the same spirit, I have retained Hagiwara's odd punctuation. My employment of a capital letter to indicate the beginning of a "sentence" is arbitrary, however, because the Japanese writing system does not have the equivalent of a capital letter.

Sakutarō Hagiwara died on May 11, 1942, a few days before the Battle of Midway, Japan's first serious setback in the war that had started six months earlier, with Japan's assault on Pearl Harbor, followed by a series of spectacular victories. Though the Midway disaster was kept as an official secret, Hagiwara's death at an early stage of the war, and his notion of "turning back to Japan" in his later years, have made some wonder whether he, had he lived through the war, would have written the kind of poems that, after Japan's defeat, prompted fervent accusations of "war responsibility" against many poets, Kōtarō Takamura most prominently among them. In the 1990s, someone brought similar charges against Akiko Yosano, who died within three weeks

after Hagiwara died, because she had written a few tanka in which she urged one of her sons, in the navy, to fight well for the country.

Hagiwara wrote only a handful of poems related to the military and war. As it happens, though, one of them has to do with Japan's infamous capture of Nanking in November 1937, and it has led some to call it a "war-collaboration poem."

On the Day Nanking Fell

The year about to end,
the soldiers' bayonets gleam white.
The army-travel calendar past summer, fall,
Shanghai scaled last night 100, 1,000 kilometers away.
Our marching days have no rest,
men and horses vie to run ahead,
supplies continuing in mud-oozed roads.
Ah those fighting on this plain
vow never to return alive,
under helmets all sunburned.

Heaven cold, sun frozen,
the year about to end,
Nanking has here fallen.
Raise our sun-bright flag,
time for all to be relieved of anxieties,
our victory decided,
they should celebrate banzai.
They should shout banzai.

Hagiwara wrote this poem in response to a request from the daily newspaper *Asahi Shinbun*. The capture of Nanking, the Chinese capital at the time, took place after a series of unexpectedly grueling battles that started in Shanghai, in August of the same year, and was reported as a great victory that called for public celebration.

Is "On the Day Nanking Fell" what some say it is? The poet Tsunao Aida (1914–1990), who was a member of the Nanking Special Service during the war and wrote poems haunted by those killings in China, has judged that because Hagiwara's poem is so utterly devoid of "an agitating rhythm" needed

to "stir up fighting spirit," it can't be described as a "war-collaboration poem."

What Hagiwara said may be more to the point. On December 11, 1937, he wrote from a hot spring in Izu to the poet Kaoru Maruyama (1899–1974), and by way of inviting him to come stay at the same inn for a couple of days, said:

> I was forcibly asked by Mr. Tsumura of the *Asahi Shinbun*, and I was too feeble-minded to decline, and finally ended up taking on something horrendous. They wanted a poem on the fall of Nanking. I thought all night in bed and the next morning sent it by special delivery, but because it fell faster than expected, it may not make it to the newspaper in time. Anyway this was the first time I did such an unconscionable piece of work. I feel severe regrets as though I joined the company of Saijō Yaso.*** (Come to think of it, even someone like Mr. Jinbō is writing war poems for *Bungei* as requested, but this is not something we can be proud of.)

What was "unconscionable" (*muryōshin no*) to Hagiwara? It was not so much that he wrote about the war—though, he said, doing so wasn't something anyone could be proud of. Rather, he regretted that he had written a poem on demand. Neither "On the Day Nanking Fell" or Hagiwara's seemingly out-of-place poem he put at the end of *Blue Cat*, "The Army," would inspire any soldier. When Hagiwara prepared the "definitive edition" of *Blue Cat*, which appeared in 1936, he left out "The Army." And as it turned out, "On the Day Nanking Fell," printed in the *Asahi Shinbun* on December 13, 1937, became the last poem he published in a periodical while alive.

—Hiroaki Sato

*Several sources for the title have been suggested. One is Edvard Munch's paintings, such as *Head of a Dog*. Another is Ishikawa's three-line tanka: "If girls were to hear me cry / they'd say I resemble / a sickly dog howling at the moon."

**This phrase has since become famous and is often used to characterize the marked tendency of Japanese intellectuals since the late nineteenth century to become infatuated with Western culture in their youth but to begin to find

solace in indigenous culture as they grow old.

***Yaso Saijō (1892–1970), a scholar of French poetry and a popular songwriter, was reputed to write a poem on any topic given and wrote some of the more popular military songs of the day.

A Note on This Edition

Cat Town assembles *Howling at the Moon: Poems of Hagiwara Sakutarō* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1978) and *Howling at the Moon: Poems and Prose of Hagiwara Sakutarō* (Green Integer, 2002), with the prefaces to the two main collections added. Many of the translations, as well as the introduction, have been revised.

Hagiwara's poems in the original Japanese are readily available in a variety of editions. All his poems can be read in a Chūkō paperback and selections in Shinchō, Iwanami, and Shichō paperbacks. All his writings are also readily available in the sixteen-volume paperback *zenshū* (complete works) published by Chikuma Shobō, which are based on the fifteen-volume hardcover *zenshū* of Hagiwara by the same publisher, from 1975 to 1978.

Howling at the Moon (1917)

Preface

THE PURPOSE OF poetic expression is not simply to express an atmosphere for the sake of atmosphere. Nor is it to describe a hallucination for the sake of hallucination. At the same time it is also not to propagate and deduce a certain type of thought. The inherent purpose of poetry, rather, is to contemplate the essence of the feeling itself trembling inside the human heart and at the same time to allow the feeling to actively pour out.

Poetry is what grasps *the nerves of feelings*. It is a *live, working psychology*.

All good lyrical poetry accompanies a kind of beauty that cannot be explained with ratiocination or words. This is called the *odor* of poetry. The *odor* (which some people call "grace" or "elegance") is the element of intoxication that is the main purpose of poetry. Accordingly, the poetry in which this odor is barely felt has little value as verse, and it is, as it were, like sake that lacks a flavor. I do not like sake that lacks a flavor.

Poetic expression may be simple, but the *odor* of poetry should be ample.

What I want the reader of my poetry to feel isn't the ideas and "things" that appear on the surface but the feeling itself that is its inner core. I express through the *rhythm* of my poetry the complex feelings in my heart that are difficult to express with words and sentences, feelings like "sorrow," "joy," "loneliness," and "fear." But *rhythm* cannot be explained. *Rhythm* is conveyed from heart to heart. Only with someone who can detect the *rhythm* without words can I hold hands and talk.

To the question "For what reason are you happy?," one can explain the reason with ease. But to the question "In what way are you happy?," no one can explain its psychology easily.

When you think of it, human feeling is extremely simple while at the same time extremely complicated. It is extremely universal while at the same time individualistic and unique.

Whatever the circumstance, for someone to express his feelings completely

is not something that can be done easily. In such a case words are useless. There are only music and poetry for that.

I sometimes think of unfortunate aquaphobia.

A human being afflicted with this illness is said to fear water terribly. That someone can fear a glass of water to such a degree as to lose the ability to breathe is something we cannot imagine no matter how hard we try.

"For what reason do you fear water?" "In what way do you fear water?" These psychologies are simply mysterious and incomprehensible to us. But for the patient, it is above all fact and truth. And in this instance, if the patient himself . . . pressed by some need . . . tries to explain this painful actual sense to someone who happens by (something that appears to be very likely. If the person who happens by has no special knowledge about this illness, there is no telling what cruel prank he might play. When I think of such a case I can only tremble with fear) what measures should the patient take? Most likely, with no explanation in words will he be able to explain the bizarre feeling.

Nevertheless, if he had the talents of a poet, he would of course make a poem. He can even explain things that cannot be explained with human language. Poetry is a language that goes beyond language.

Aquaphobia is an extremely rare example. But it is also at the same time an extremely commonplace example.

Each human being possesses a body and nerves that are different from one person to another. My sorrow is not his sorrow. His joy is not my joy.

A person, individually, is always terribly lonely forever and ever.

Since time immemorial, God has created billions of human beings. Still, he has never ever created two human beings with completely the same face. Every person is born as a single unit and must die as a single unit.

That said, none of us are never units of the universe that are cut off *all alone*.

Our faces, our skins, are each different from one person to the next. Still, in reality we each have identical things. When you discover these *common* things between human beings, "morality" and "love" in mankind are born. When you discover these common things among mankind and flora, "morality" and "love" in nature are born. And we are no longer lonely forever.

This body and these feelings of mine, of course, I alone possess in the whole

world. Also, there is only I who completely understand this. This is something that has an extremely unique character. Still, at the same time it must be what is common to everyone in the world. At the focal point of these various unique and common feelings do true "joy" and "mysteriousness" of poetry and song exist. Apart from this logic, I do not know the meaning of myself making poetry.

Poetry is a product of a single flash of inspiration. A certain kind of feeling one has in one's daily life finds *rhythm* the first time it touches some electricity. This electricity is a miracle to the poet. Poetry is not something to be made in anticipation.

Before, I had thought that poetry was like a *mystery*. I had also thought it was like an effect of communication between the ineffable Holy Spirit of the universe and the wisdom of man. Or I had thought that it was like the key to the mystery of nature we cannot understand. But, when I think of it now, it was a risible superstition.

Poetry is nothing like such a monstrous demon, but in truth it is like our brothers and sisters and lovers that are easy for us to get familiar with.

At times, with the wretched heart of a crippled child, I sob in the dark corner of a room. At such times, there is a maiden who comes close to my shoulders and puts her gentle hand on my trembling heart. Poetry is that maiden nurse.

When I think of poetry, I feel its fierce human *suffering* and its *joy*.

Poetry is neither a mystery nor a symbol nor a demon. Poetry is nothing more than a lonely consolation for the owner of a sickly soul and a man of solitude.

When I think of poetry, I become teary, without meaning to, because of the wretchedness of human sentiments.

The past is a painful memory to me. The past was an ominous nightmare of frustrations, inaction, and a suffering body and flesh.

The dog that howls at the moon howls suspicious and fearful of his own shadow. To the dog's ailing heart, the moon is an ominous puzzle like a pallid ghost. The dog howls far into the distance.

I want to nail my own gloomy shadow into the moonlit earth. Lest the shadow follow me forever.

Sickly Face at the Bottom of the Ground

At the bottom of the ground a face emerging,
a lonely invalid's face emerging.

In the dark at the bottom of the ground,
soft vernal grass-stalks beginning to flare,
rat's nest beginning to flare,
and entangled with the nest,
innumerable hairs beginning to tremble,
time the winter solstice,
from the lonely sickly ground,
roots of thin blue bamboo beginning to grow,
beginning to grow,
and that, looking truly pathetic,
looking blurred,
looking truly, truly, pathetic.

In the dark at the bottom of the ground,
a lonely invalid's face emerging.

Grass-stalk

In the cold of winter,
wrapped with slender hairs,
a grass-stalk, look,
bluish the stalk seems lonesome,
yet wrapped all over with slender hairs,
a grass-stalk, look.

Way beyond the sky foreboding snow,
a grass-stalk begins to flare.

Bamboo

Something straight growing on the ground,
something sharp, blue, growing on the ground,
piercing the frozen winter,
in morning's empty path where its green leaves glisten,
shedding tears,
shedding the tears,
now repentance over, from above its shoulders,
blurred bamboo roots spreading,
something sharp, blue, growing on the ground.

Bamboo

On the gleaming ground bamboo growing,
blue bamboo growing,
under the ground bamboo roots growing,
roots gradually tapering off,
from root tips cilia growing,
faintly blurred cilia growing,
faintly trembling.

On the hard ground bamboo growing,
from the ground bamboo sharply growing,
straight, blind, bamboo growing,
at each frozen joint gallantly,
under the blue sky bamboo growing,
bamboo, bamboo, bamboo growing.

Behold all sins have been inscribed,

yet not all are mine,
verily manifest to me are
only phantoms of blue flames without shadows,
only the ghosts of pathos that fade off over the snow,
ah painful confession on such a day what shall I make of them,
all are but phantoms of blue flames.

Chrysanthemum Gone Rancid

The chrysanthemum has gone sour,
the chrysanthemum aches and drips,
a pity what a pity, in early Frost Month,
my platinum hand wilts,
as I sharpen my fingers,
hoping to nip the chrysanthemum,
the chrysanthemum lest it be nipped,
in a corner of glittering heaven,
the chrysanthemum is ill,
the rancid chrysanthemum aches.

Turtle

There's a forest,
there's a marsh,
there's the azure,
on a man's hand, feeling weight,
quietly a pure gold turtle sleeps,
bearing with the pain,
of this gleaming, lonely nature,
into a man's soul gropingly it goes down,
into the depths of the azure the turtle goes down.

Flute

Looking up high, on a pine branch a koto being plucked,
adding rouge to the fingers,
plucking a muffled koto,
ah plucking accompanying the sound of someone's wife's koto,
the commendable flute is in the heavens.
Today in the frosty night sky, clear, limpid,
making the pine-top glow,
sorrowful, single-minded,
it has revealed itself, repentant.

The commendable flute is in the heavens.

Winter

Signs of crimes and sins appear in heaven,
appear on piling snow,
glitter out of treetops,
and shining beyond mid-winter,
signs of sins committed appear everywhere.

Look, sleeping
living things in the dark earth
have begun to build houses of repentance.

Hanged in Heaven

Onto the pine needles that gleam in distant sky,
tears of penitence drip,
he hangs his neck from a pine in heaven,
white in the sky of distant night.

Out of his longing for a pine in heaven,
like a prayer, he's been hung.

Eggs

Located at a very high treetop,
tiny eggs gleam,
look up, and a bird nest gleams,
now it's time a sinner prayed.

The fresh green and fragrant winds of a May morning make an aristocrat of my life. Under a dripping sky-blue window, I would like to ply forks of pure silver with a woman I love. Someday, once in my life, I would like to steal and eat that love-plate of skylarks, which gleams in the sky.

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Hands of Sentimentality

My sex, its sentimentality,
laments the numerous hands,
the hands always dance overhead,
gleam and grieve on the chest,
but summer slowly weakens,
returning, the swallows as soon leave their nests,
and barley is cooled.
Ah, oblivious of the city,
I no longer play the Chinese fiddle,
my hands turn to steel,
gloomily dig the earth,
my pitiful hands of sentimentality dig the earth.

Mountain Living

August is for praying,

fish and birds have faded into a distance,
bellflower color weakens,
gradually weakens,
my heart badly weakens,
sorrows do not leave the shadows of trees,
in my hand the Bible turns to silver.

Seedlings

Seedlings gleam in the blue sky,
a child digs the earth.

So as to obtain seedlings that do not grow,
from the bottom of a bright bowl,
I have pulled out my white fingers.

A Case of Murder

In a distant sky a pistol shot.
Another pistol shot.
Ah my detective in a crystalline costume
sneaks in through his lover's window,
the floor is of pellucid gems,
from between her fingers,
deathly pale blood flowing,
on the sad woman's corpse,
a cold katydid is crying.

One morning early Frost Month,
the detective in a crystalline costume
turned the town crossroads.
At the crossroads an autumn fountain.
Already alone with himself the detective feels melancholy.

Look, along a distant lonely marble sidewalk,
the suspect is sliding off, desperately.

Tray Landscape

Spring and summer gone, hands amber,
eyes wet in the basin,
stones misty green,
on each one of them melancholy censed,
look, in the deep cleft of mountain and water,
a thin waterfall flows,
a waterfall flows,
and coldly fish and clams go down.

Dish of Skylarks

The evening *agape* I consecrate,
I will cense the candles with the melancholy of fish fat,
and out of longing open the green window.
A pity what a pity, looking at the sky,
with May flowing far, far in the distance,
I will hold a dish of skylarks in my hands
and out of longing proceed to your left.

Seeds on a Palm

I make a mound of earth on my hand,
sow seeds over the earth,
now as I pour water over the earth with a white *watering pot*,
the water pours purling,

the cold of earth smarts on the hollow of my hand.
Ah, I push open the May window in the distance,
put out my hand in sunlight,
and being in a halcyon landscape,
the skin grows balmy and warm,
the seeds on my hand begin endearingly to breathe.

Heavenscape

Quietly squeak, four-wheeled carriage,
the sea grows faintly light,
barley flows in the distance,
quietly squeak, four-wheeled carriage.
Through gleaming fish-birds' heavenscape,
and over the buildings with windows blue,
quietly squeak, four-wheeled carriage.

Anxiety

Frost and a little cold morning,
holding a dish of skylarks deferentially in her hands a girl was walking,
when, leaning against a tree on the street,
peering closely at the spaces between the woman's slender fingers painted with white powder,
desiring to steal and eat this delicious dish of skylarks,
desperately anxious,
one person even became ever so anxious that he, utterly, joined his hands in prayer.

A Sad Distant View

When sad twilight comes,
the entire city of Tokyo is packed with laborers,
the *shadows* of their emaciated hats
spread all over town,
and in a ward there, a ward here,
digging up the hard ground,
dig them out,
and they're soot-dark silver snuff-wrappers.
They weigh up to eleven drams,
sweet violets' bone-dry bulbs.
And that, starting from a distance, around Honjo Fukagawa,
they in time come, spreading all over the city.
Under the sensual twilight shadow,
a wholly shriveled heart is plying a shiny *shovel*.

Sad Moonlit Night

A damned thief dog
is howling at the moon above the rotting wharf.
A soul listens,
and in gloomy voices,
yellow daughters are singing in chorus,
singing in chorus,
on the wharf's dark stone wall.

Always,
why am I like this,

dog,
pale unhappy dog?

Death

From the bottom of the earth I stare at,
a ridiculous hand sticks out,
a leg sticks out,
a neck protrudes,
gentlemen,
this damned thing, what on earth,
what kind of goose is this?
From the bottom of the earth I stare at,
looking foolish,
a hand sticks out,
a leg sticks out,
a neck protrudes.

Dangerous Walk

Spring has come,
I've attached *rubber* to the soles of my new shoes,
so no matter how shoddily made a pavement I walk,
they won't make that abominable noise,
besides I'm holding tons of fragile things,
which is what's so risky.
Now, I've slowly begun to walk,
friends, don't move,
don't move,
I'm worried, so worried,
no matter what happens,
please don't look at my distorted footwork.
I'm up against the wall,

like a sick balloon rider,
always in an emaciated direction,
reeling reeling I am walking.

Alcoholic's Death

Supine, dead, an alcoholic,
from somewhere near his snow-white belly,
things that are unidentifiable flow,
transparent blue serum,
a distorted multilateral heart,
rotten entrails,
rheumatic shrunken wrists,
rubbery organs,
all over,
the ground glitters,
grasses are sharply pointed,
everything gleams like *radium*.

In this lonely landscape, detached,
the murderer's dust-white face,
like grass, is flabbily smiling.

Bone-Dry Crime

From where did the criminal escape?
Ah, for years, for many years,
there's a fallen chair here,
there's a weapon here,
there's a corpse here,
there's blood here,
then too, in the pale May sky light,
a detective's face, dark, in deep thought,

and a lonely woman's hair, trembling.

A Frog's Death

A frog was killed,
the children made a circle and raised their hands,
all together,
raised their lovely,
bloody hands,
the moon appeared,
on the hill stands a man.
Under his hat there's a face.

sensations and ailments of sensual spring nights

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The Reason the Person Inside Looks Like a Deformed Invalid

I am standing in the shadow of a *lace* curtain,
that is the reason my face looks vague.
I am holding a telescope in my hands,
I am looking through it far into the distance,
I am looking at the woods,
where dogs and lambs made of nickel
and children with bald heads are walking,
those are the reasons my eyes look *somewhat* smoked over.
I ate too much of the plate of *cabbage* this morning,
and besides this windowglass is very shoddily made,
that is the reason my face looks so excessively distorted.
To tell you the truth,
I am healthy, perhaps too healthy,
and yet, why are you staring at me, there?
Why smiling so eerie a smile?
Oh, of course, as for the part of my body below the waist,
if you are saying that area isn't *clear*,
that's a somewhat foolish question,
of course, that is, close to this pale window wall,
I am standing inside the house.

Chair

The person sleeping under the chair,
is he the children of the person who made the grand house?

Spring Night

Things like littlenecks,
things like quahogs,
things like water fleas,
these organisms, bodies buried in sand,
out of nowhere,
hands like silk threads innumerably grow,
hands' slender hairs move as the waves do.
A pity, on this lukewarm spring night,
purling the brine flows,
over the organisms water flows,
even the tongues of clams, flickering, looking sad,
as I look around at the distant beach,
along the wet beach path,
a row of invalids, bodies below their waists missing, is walking,
walking unsteadily.
Ah, over the hair of those human beings as well,
passes the spring night haze, all over, deeply,
rolling, rolling in,
this white row of waves is ripples.

The World of Bacteria

Bacteria's legs,
bacteria's mouths,
bacteria's ears,
bacteria's noses,

bacteria are swimming.

Some in a person's womb,
some in a clam's intestines,
some in an onion's spherical core,
some in a landscape's center.

Bacteria are swimming.

Bacteria's hands grow right and left, crosswise,
the tips of their hands branch out like roots,
from there sharp nails grow,
capillaries and such spread *all over*.

Bacteria are swimming.

Where bacteria live their lives,
as if through an invalid's skin,
a vermilion light shines thinly in,
and only that area is faintly visible,
looks truly, truly sorrow-unbearable.

Bacteria are swimming.

Swimmer

The swimmer's body elongates aslant,
arms, laid out long side by side, are extended,
the swimmer's heart becomes translucent as a jellyfish,
the swimmer's eyes listening to a temple bell ringing,
the swimmer's soul looks above the water, at the moon.

Daybreak

During the long illness and pain,

spiders have covered his face with webs,
his body below the waist has faded like a shadow,
a bush has grown above his waist,
arms rotten,
body all over, truly messed up,
oh, today again the moon is out,
the daybreak moon is out,
and in the opaque light like a lantern
a deformed white dog is howling.
With eastern clouds near,
in the lonesome road's direction, howling, a dog, you see.

Cats

Coal-black cats, two of them,
on the roof of a sensual night,
from the tips of their taut, erect tails,
a threadlike *crescent* blurs.
"Owaa, good evening."
"Owaa, good evening."
"Ogyaa, ogyaa, ogyaa."
"Owaaa, the master of this house is ill."

Clam

Something cold is born,
its teeth flowing in the water,
its hands flowing in the water,
tides rise flowing not knowing where,
as I step in the shallows and call,
the clam, a distant voice, responds.

In a Corner of a Wheat Field

With an honest heart,
we would like to talk,
those coming from religion
are all seen in the form of ghosts,
of the things that I saw in the past,
I would like to tell you clearly,
in general things of this sort,
flourishingly costumed,
gleaming,
were the other halves of gods who had something great to hide.

Sunny Spring

Ah, spring comes from afar, smoky,
under puffy swollen willow buds,
eager to press its gentle lips close,
and suck in a virgin's kiss,
spring comes from afar riding a *rubber*-wheeled rickshaw.
In the absentminded landscape,
the white rickshawman's legs hurry,
but going, going, the wheels turn backward,
gradually the shafts begin to lift away from the ground,
then too, the good passenger is *oddly* unsteady about his waist,
all of which looks much too precarious, so saying,
at the least expected moment the spring gives a snow-white yawn.

Rotten Clam

Body half buried in sand,
still it's lolling its tongue.

Over this invertebrate's head,
pebbles and brine rustle, rustle, rustle, rustle, flowing,
flowing,
ah so quietly as a dream flowing.

From between the sand and sand that go on flowing,
the clam again has its lolling tongue flicker and flare red,
this clam is very emaciated, I'm saying.
Look, its rubbery entrails seem about to rot,
and so when sad-looking evening comes,
sitting on the pale beach,
flickering, flickering, it lets out rotten breaths, I tell you.

The Essence of Spring

With numberless worm eggs,
the spring has swollen full,
yes look around and survey,
every space there is, is crammed with eggs of this sort.
See the cherry blossoms,
these eggs are transparent all over the cherry blossoms as well,
the willow twigs too, of course,
even things like moths and butterflies,
their thin wings are shaped with eggs,
which are the things that glitter glitter like that.
Ah, unseen to the eye,
these faint eggs are elliptical in shape,
they jostle one another in every place,
spread and fill the air,
have grown firm as a swollen *rubber ball*,
poke with your fingertip more attentively,
the essence of so-called spring is found here more or less.

Along with a Gift

In the file of those damned soldiers,
there was one with a bad disposition,
who probably on purpose missed the bull's-eye of the target.
When the man who was shot
came to in his dream,
in the sky were streaks of lonely tears.
"This is that kind of tobacco."

Love-Pity

Sharply with cute granite teeth,
gritting on the green of grass, woman,
woman,
with this light blue grass *ink*,
let me paint your face, leaving no spot untouched,
to arouse your lust,
let us play secretly in a lush grass thicket,
look,
here a bluebell is shaking his head,
there a *gentian's* hand is moving pliantly,
ah I'll hold your breasts tight,
you on your part push my body down with all your might,
and in this field without a soul,
let us play a serpentine game,
ah I on my part will pierce you through with love,
will on your beautiful skin, smear blue grass leaf juice.

The One Who's in Love with Love

I painted rouge on my lips,
and kissed the trunk of a new birch,
even if I were a handsome man,
on my chest are no breasts like *rubber balls*,
from my skin rises no fragrance of fine-*textured* powder,
I am a wizened man of ill fate,
ah, what a pitiable man,
in today's balmy early-summer field,

in a stand of glistening trees,
I slipped on my hands sky-blue gloves,
slung around my waist something like a *corset*,
smeared on my nape something like nape-powder,
thus hushed assuming a coquettish *pose*,
as young girls do,
I cocked my head a little,
and kissed the trunk of a new birch,
I painted rosy rouge on my lips,
and clung to a tall tree of snowy white.

Prince of May

When walking over young grass,
my shoes go on leaving white footprints,
the silver of my thin *stick* becomes polished with the grass,
my gloves that I rolled off are dancing in the air,
ah I wish to cleanly throw off melancholy and all,
and be a mild-mannered lamb,
wish to place my hand on your moist nape,
and be smelling the fragrance of new iris-powder,
when walking over young grass,
I am a prince of May.

White Moon

From the violent pains of rotten teeth,
holding my swollen cheek,
I was digging under a jujube tree,
thinking of sowing some grass seeds,
soiling my svelte fingers with mud,
I was digging up the cold ground,
ah, I remember it,

toward evening on a chilly day,
under the brand-new hole,
flicker, flicker, an earthworm was moving,
when from behind a low building,
as if to slip over and caress
a woman's snow-white ear a moon rose,
a moon rose.

Portrait

He always has a crooked face,
and stands by the window,
when the time comes for white cherries to bloom,
he again crawls out of the bottom of the ground,
like a mole,
intent, stealing his footsteps,
he slipped in the window, when
I took a snapshot.

In the shadow of vague light,
I looked through the whitened plate,
some shadow was caught on it, faded.
Only above my neck,
I was trembling like a courtesan's-flower.

Lonely Personality

A lonely personality calls to my friend,
my unknown friend, may you come quickly,
let us sit down on this old bench here, talking quietly to each other,
without sorrowing over anything, let us, you and I, live a quiet happy day,
let us be listening to the quiet sound of a fountain in a distant park,
quietly, quietly, let us be holding each other like this,

separated far from mothers, fathers, and brothers,
let us tie together the hearts of orphans unknown to mothers and fathers,
of the lives of all the human beings there are,
let us talk about the lives of only you and me,
about the secret lives of only us two, poor and helpless,
ah, aren't those words, fluttering like dead autumn leaves, falling to our laps as well?

My breast is like the breast of a feeble infant, once ill.
My heart trembles with fear, pain, painful, as if burning in moistness of passion.
Ah, then, once too, I went on climbing a high mountain,
looking up at the arduous slope, yearning like a worm, I went on climbing,
standing on the very top of the mountain, the worm shed lonely tears.
Looking up, at the mountaintop with a profusion of grasses, a large whitish cloud was flowing.

Nature anywhere oppresses me,
and human kindnesses make me gloomy,
rather I prefer walking in a bustling city park until I get tired,
and find a bench under some lonely tree,
I prefer to be looking at the sky absentmindedly,
ah, I prefer to be looking at the smoke and soot flowing away far and sad over the city sky,
or at a swallow flying away over the roofs of buildings, into the distance, small.

My personality, loneliest in the world,
is calling loudly to an unknown friend,
my obsequious strange personality,
looking shabby like a crow,
is trembling on the corner of a deserted, winter-withered bench.

Unknown Dog

This utterly unknown dog follows me,
shabby, limping on its hind leg, a crippled dog's shadow.
Ah, I do not know where I'm going,
in the direction of the road that I go,
roofs of tenements are being pelted pelted in the wind,
in a gloomy, empty lot by the road,
bone-dry grass leaves are pliantly thinly moving.

Ah, I do not know where I'm going,
a large, *organism*-like moon is vaguely afloat ahead of me,
and in the lonely street behind me,
the tip of the dog's thin long tail is dragging on the ground.

Ah, no matter how far, how far I go,
this utterly unknown dog follows me,
crawling along the filthy ground,
behind me, dragging its hind leg, a sick dog,
distant, long, sadly terrified,
at the lonely moon, howling afar and pale, an *unhappy* dog's shadow.

Looking at the Top of a Blue Tree

In the backstreet of an impoverished, lonely town,
a blue tree was thinly thinly growing.

I am yearning for love,
yearning for a girl poor of heart who loves me,

her hand is trembling on a blue treetop,
in order to yearn for my love, always at a high place, is trembling with gentle feeling.

I did some begging on a highway far, far away,
miserably the starved heart smelled the smells of rotten scallions and meat and shed tears,
with the heart of a beggar in wholly reduced circumstances I always walked about the backstreets of towns.

The heart yearning for love, is the dear, big ocean-like feeling,
that comes after a long long tiredness of sad solitude.

At the top of a blue tree growing on arid roadside ground,
a tiny leaf was fluttering, turning in the wind.

Frog

Frog,
in a growth of blue *pampas grass* and *reed*,
the frog looks swollen white,
in the eveningscape with rain falling fully,
gyo, gyo, gyo, gyo, croaks the frog.

Slapping down on the coal-black ground,
tonight the rain and the wind are fierce,
even on a cold leaf of grass,
it sucks a sigh in, the frog,
gyo, gyo, gyo, gyo, croaks the frog.

Frog,
my heart is not far from you,
I held a lantern in my hand,
and was watching the face of the dark garden,
was watching, in a tired state of mind, the grass and tree leaves wilting in the rain.

Climbing a Mountain

On a trip, sent to a woman

At the mountaintop there is a pretty grass lot,
on it we were lying down.
Looking up and surveying the distant mountain-foot,
all around, it felt like a view of a spacious ocean.
In the sky a wind is flowing;
I picked up a stone and putting it to my mouth,
purposelessly as to where,
was walking the mountaintop with profuse growths,

even now, I am thinking of you.

Seaside Inn

Beyond a grove of red pines,
dark, large waves were distant, gleaming,
here on the lonely Echigo coast,
for a moment, with a mind to pray for what,
alone I finish supper,
and light a candle in the living room of a seaside inn.

At the Kujiranami coast

Solitude

By a dust-white country road,
a heart like a tired horse
is gazing at bone-dry grass in the sun,
gazing at a slanting, pliantly thinly flaring,
trembling lonely grass blade.

Standing in a lonely country sun,
what are you looking at,
trembling, my soul of solitude?

On the face of this dusty landscape,
a thin streak of tear.

White Public Benches

Along a path in the woods,
is a row of snow-white public benches,
around there, on the lonely mountain,
shades of green are very deep,
looking through the woods,
there too a lonely stand of trees is visible,
and a row of benches with elegant, snow-white legs.

Fear of the Countryside

I fear the countryside,
fear the rows of rice stalks growing thin and long,
trembling in deserted paddies of the countryside.
Fear the swarms of poor human beings living in dark dwellings.
When sitting on a ridge between paddies,
the billow-like weight of soil darkens my heart,
the rotten smell of soil blackens my skin,
winter-withered lonely nature oppresses my life.

The air of the countryside is gloomy and oppressive,
the touch of the countryside is gritty and sickening,
when I sometimes think of the countryside,
I'm tormented by the smell of animal skin coarse in *texture*.
I fear the countryside,

the countryside is a pale fever dream.

Skylark Nest

With the saddest heart in the world I walked down the riverbed of my hometown.
On the riverbed, starworts, horsetails and such, parsley, shepherd's-purse, and even the roots of violets profusely grew.
Behind the low sandmound the Toné River flows. Like a thief, darkly helplessly flows.
I was still, crouched on the riverbed.
Before my eyes is a bush of riverbed-mugwort.
A handful, the bush is. Like an emaciated woman's hair the mugwort loosely moved in the wind.
I am deep in thought about some unsavory thing. A terrible ominous thought.
And, with an almost deranged sun shining upon my hat, muggy, I'm exhausted, perspiring.
Like a parched man panting, yearning for water, I shot out my hand.
As if grasping my own soul I grasped *something*.
Grasped something like bone-dry hair.
Hidden in the riverbed-mugwort a skylark nest.

Piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, in the sky a skylark calls.
I gazed at the pitiful skylark nest.
The nest swelled on my large palm, gently as a softball.
The sensation that fawns, seeks love from those innocently raised, was apparently felt in my heart.
I became freakishly lonely and felt pain.
Like a parent bird I craned my neck again and peered into the nest.
Inside the nest, as in a beam of light at evening, it was vague and dark.
An incomparably *DELICATE* pathos, like touching the cilia of a feeble plant, brushed the peripheries of my nerves like a shadow and was gone.
Illuminated by the scant beam of light in the nest, rat-colored skylark eggs,

about four of them, gleamed solitary.
I stretched my fingers and picked up one of them.
The lukewarm breathing of a living thing tickled the belly of my thumb.
A confounding sensation like looking at a dying dog, boiled up at the bottom of my heart.
Of the lukewarm unpleasantness of the sensation of a man at such a moment a disastrous crime is born. A heart afraid of crime is the forerunner of a heart that gives birth to a crime.
I looked at the egg held between my fingers gently against the sunlight.
Something faintly red and vague was visible like a clot of blood.
Something like cold juice was felt.
At that moment I felt a raw-smelling liquid oozily flowing between my fingers.
The egg was torn.
A barbarian's fingers had savagely crushed a delicate thing.
On the rat-colored thin eggshell the character K was inscribed, red, and lightly.

An exquisite bird-bud, bird's parent.
A nest made with a lovely beak, a small animal's job for which it did its best, a manifestation of a lovable instinct.
Various good-natured, demure thoughts welled up violently in the bottom of my heart.
I tore an egg.
Killed love and joy, did a job full of sorrow and curse.
Did a dark unpleasant deed.
I made a gloomy face and looked at the ground.
On the ground pebbles glittered, glass fragments, and grass roots, everywhere.
Piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, in the sky the skylark calls.
There's a raw-smelling odor of spring.
I was again deep in thought about that *unsavory* thing.
That a human being dislikes the odor of a human being's skin.
That a human being feels that a human being's sexual organs are hideous.
That at times a human being looks like a horse.
That a human being betrays a human being's love.
That a human being dislikes a human being.
Ah, misanthrope-invalid.
Reading a certain famous Russian's novel, a very heavy novel, I came upon the story of a misanthrope-invalid.

It's an excellent novel, but a terrifying novel.
Not to be able to love with one's body those whom one's heart loves, what a hideous thought. What a hideous illness.
Not once since I was born have I kissed girls.
Nor have I ever simply put my hand around the shoulders of the birds I love and talked like an elder brother.
Ah, birds whom I love, I love, I love.
I love human beings. Nevertheless I fear human beings.
Sometimes I escape from everyone and become solitary. And my heart loving everyone becomes tearful.
I always like, while walking on a deserted lonely beach, to think of the crowds in the distant city.
About the lamp-lighting time in the distant city, I like to walk alone in the park grounds of my hometown.
Ah, yesterday as usual, I kept dreaming sad dreams.
I smelled the odor of rotten human blood.
I feel pain.
I become lonely.
Why can't one love with one's body those whom one loves with one's heart?
I repent.
Repent.
Whenever I feel pain, I repent.
Sit on the riverbed sand of the Toné River, and repent.

Piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, piyo, in the sky the skylarks call.
Riverbed-mugwort roots profusely spread.
The Toné River is flowing stealthily like a thief.
Here and there, I see farmers' melancholy faces.
The faces are dark, looking only at the ground.
On the ground, spring, like smallpox, is ponderously erupting.

With what pity I picked up the skylark egg.

Flute

The child wanted a flute.
At that time the child's father seemed to be doing some writing.
The child went to peer into his father's room.
The child, hushed, stood in the shadow of the door.
There is a smell of cherry blossoms in the shadow of the door.

At that time, inside the room, the adult was thinking.
His thought whirled round and round, the *dilemma* of some complicated thought convulsed his heart.
Look, his forehead thrown down on the *desk* had for how long a snake coiled tightly around it.
That is, this morning's springlike incident made his heart melancholic.

Instinct and conscience.
Lonesomeness of the adult heart that attempts to divide into two a heart that is hard to divide.
The two shadows that were pulled by force, tangling like threads, roamed near the darkening skylight.
He saw these sad ghosts pass above his head.
The adult, holding his breath in terror, began to pray, "O God, may You not make two hearts into one."
Nevertheless for a long time ghosts went in and out of the shadow of the door.
There was a smell of cherry blossoms in the shadow of the door.
His pale-looking, sickly child was standing there.
The child wanted a flute.

The child opened the door and stood in a corner of the room.
The child saw his great father's brain, face thrown on the *desk* by the window.
Excessive shades surrounded the brain.
The child's attention sat on that place like a fly.
For the child's forlorn heart was attracted to *something*.
Gradually the child's heart began to feel power.
The child truly, in a *clear* voice, shouted.
For look, there was a flute placed there.
For there was a small purple flute that the child wanted to have.
The child hadn't told his father anything about a flute.
Therefore this fact was utterly a coincidence.

Probably it was some sort of mysterious turn of events.
Nevertheless the child believed firmly in his father's miracle.
About the flute of shadings to which the greatest adult's thought gave birth.
About the flute put on the desk.

Blue Cat (1923)

Preface

MY SENTIMENTS DO not belong to the category of *passion*. Rather, it is the *nostalgia* of a quiet soul, the echo of a fife you hear on a spring night.

Some people say my poetry is sensual. It may be that some are like that. Still, a correct view opposes it. Nothing "sensual" can be the *motive* of my poetry. It is a chord over the keynote. Or an ornament. I am not a man who can get intoxicated on the senses. What I truly try to sing of is different. It is that atmosphere—the sound of a fife you hear on a spring night. It is not the senses, not a passion, not an excitement, but simply the nostalgia of a cloud that quietly drifts in the shadow of a soul. It is a tearful yearning for a reality far, far away.

From which moment, from which time it comes, I do not know. Since my tender boyhood I've been tormented by my soul's nostalgia with no apparent cause. My night bed was whitishly wet with tears, when the day broke the intestines of my sentimentality were scratched apart by the rooster's voice. For days I ran around the edges of the spring field aimlessly in love with a member of the opposite sex, hugging a tree trunk alone, singing "The One Who's in Love with Love."

Yes, these sentiments belong to my distant character. They are what, since my boyhood of the past, and even now, visits the pillow of my night bed, sounding the sensuous yet tearful tune of a fife, makes me play entangled with the tender sound of the fife, inciting me with some inexplicable nostalgic thoughts, and write.

Thus I make poetry. Like the moths that swarm around a lantern, deceived by the phantom of certain flowery mysterious sentiments, trying to touch the essence of invisible reality, I vainly flap, flap my wings as fragile as *sponge cake*. I am a pitiable fantasizing child, the sad fate of a moth.

That being the case, anyone who reads my poetry will hear, in the shadow of my words, this endlessly pathetic *elegy*. That sound of the fife is "sensuous metaphysics." That sound of the fife is Plato's Eros—the flapping that yearns for the reality of the soul. And, yes, that alone is my so-called "music." It is the music that is the Symbolist credo, "Poetry must above all be music."

Sensory melancholy! That too belongs to my distant character. Like the cherry

blossoms that grow swarming under the spring light, or like the sour smell of chrysanthemums, it is the most depressing and desultory thing in the world. Thus my life will sorrow over the twilight that is sensual yet decadent. Yes it's melancholy, melancholy, and that too is the *theme* of my lyrics.

That said, my recent life is inclined not so much toward such sensory things as toward a meditative melancholy. (For example, in this collection the poems in the "Will and Darkness" section belong to this tendency. The fatalistic gloominess you see in these poems is the afterimage reflected in the sentiments of an utterly meditative life.) Thus some of my poems generally belong to a sensory melancholy, while certain others belong to a meditative melancholy. But, whichever it may be, the *rhythm* that I really want to convey is not it. It is not these "sensory things" or "idealistic things." Those things are no more than the costumes of my poetry. The essence of my poetry—that fragrant throb of my heart pulsing that becomes the motive of my poetry-making—lies above all else in the charm of the tender sound of the fife. It lies in the pitifulness of yearnings with no apparent cause for the world of reality. Thus I breathe into the fife's mouth hole, trying to play a mysterious and sensuous life.

Accordingly, my poetic style doesn't have the indulgent confusion such as seen in the modern Impressionist School. Nor does it have the pressure of the heavily gloomy, oppressive Idealist Poetry School. Rather, my poetic style is calm and old-fashioned. It honors the innocence of lyrical thought and the pride of devoted sentiments. It is, truly, in the flow of the Emotionalist Poetic School that follows the orthodoxy of Romanticism.

"The aim of poetry is not to sing of truth or morality. Poetry is simply an expression for poetry." Nothing has so thoroughly penetrated the essence of art than these words of Baudelaire. We will drive all the impure ideas out of the elements and appreciation of poetry and song. We determine "intoxication" and "flavor," the fiercely fragrant happiness, to be the "ultimate" of poetry and song. Needless to say, as far as the essence of beauty is concerned, no sophistry would accommodate any addition to it.

As I once wrote in my preface to the collection *Howling at the Moon*, to me poetry is neither a mystery nor a religion. Even less is it "a life-or-death work" or "a sacred way of ascetic training." It is nothing more than "a sad consolation" for me.

It is the voice of a blue heron calling in the marshes of life, the sound of a wind darkly whispering over the reeds on a moonlit night.

Poetry always stands at the head of the currents of time, and most acutely feels and touches the feelings of the coming century. That being the case, the true value of a collection of poetry should be determined at least five years, ten years after its publication. Five years, ten years later, vulgar folk in general will catch up for the first time with the position where poetry now stands. That is, normally poetry is best when it is published sooner and understood later. We poets can only despise things like pursuing fashionable thoughts and adopting ourselves to things that are favored for the moment but shallow.

Poetry always looks down on vulgar folk, transcends the air of the age, and honors the most noble and clear spirit—that is utterly natural in its essence.

I have made poetry for a long time but I have less and less confidence in it. Someone like me is no more than a miserable blue cat's nightmare.

At a small rural city near the Toné River

Twilight Room

The tired heart sleeps well through the night
I sleep well
the owner of a lonely heart in flannel
what is it there quietly moving in dream a suckling
freezing from cold a fly's whimper
bumm bumm bumm bumm bumm bumm.

I feel sorrow over the dust-white light of this room
I feel lonely about the powerless tremor of this life.

Lover
you're sitting there, by the pillow on my bed
lover you're sitting there.
Your slender neck
your hair you've grown long
listen my gentle lover
please stroke my miserable fate
I feel sorrow
I watch
there a painful emotion
the melancholy of a landscape that sickens and expands
ah from a corner of the lachrymose room tired wandering over the floor the ghost of a fly
bumm bumm bumm bumm bumm bumm.

Lover
maiden sitting by the pillow in my room
what do you see there
what do you see about me
are you looking at my emaciated body the shadow that thought left in the past

lover
as if smelling a sour chrysanthemum
I smell your mysterious passion your pale faith
come let us unite ourselves body to body
your white hand laid on this hand laid on this warm thing.

Lover
the light in this quiet room is faintly red
there again a powerless fly's whimper
bumm bumm bumm bumm bumm bumm.
Lover
my piteous heart is like a child clinging to your hands and your breast
lover
lover.

Longing for a Bed

Where is our sad bed
where are hands and feet crouched in the white mattress of a fluffy bed
we men are always sad at heart
we don't have beds
but all young women have beds
all young women have monkey-like tiny hands and feet
and crouch like birds in their great white beds
all young women sob merrily in their beds
ah what unhappy things they are
like those young women
we too would like to sob in abandonment
for warm beds.
Look in all the beautiful beds young women's chests gently hold one another
tie yourselves with strings heart to heart
hand to hand
foot to foot
body to body
soothe one another by touching heart for heart

hand for hand
foot for foot
body for body
in these snow-white beds
joy of what beautiful women's skin
sigh of what piteous feeling.
Nonetheless we men are poor at heart
and always sorrowful long for the large bed of mankind
the bed, with springs, is fluffy and warm
a bed where, as if crouched in deep snow
people's hearts melt into one
a bed of boundless beautiful love
ah where is our sad bed we long for
where is the bed that we long for
for our bone-dry ugly hands and feet
for this miserable tired soul where is it.

Surveying the Offing

On this beach here not even grasses grow
what a lonely beach
as I quietly watch the waves like this
upon waves waves pile
and a white evening moon seems to float up above them
out alone I view shore-tamed pines
I view the islands and ships afloat in the sky
and am lying, arms and legs stretched out
for a hint of happiness I've called to for long but had no response from
I turn to the offing and survey.

To Be Held in Strong Arms

Like a reed blown in the wind

my heart is feeble always trembling with fear
woman
hold my body stoutly
with your beautiful dauntless right arm
soothe this trembling sick heart quietly quietly
just hold it tight my body
come near my shoulder closely
and put your lovely warm hand
on my feeble heart
ah place your hand here on this spot of the heart
woman
and you, talk to me
in gentle words wet with tears,
“Good child
don’t fear do not fear anything
you are healthy and happy
whatever may frighten your heart you should not be frightened
just gaze into the distance
do not bat your eyes
if you bat your eyes, your feeble heart will fly away like a bird
stay always firmly close by me
firmly on this heart of mine
these beautiful hands
this chest this arm
and these fearless breasts.”

Longing I Walk in a Crowd

Always I long for a city
long to be in a city’s bustling crowd
a crowd is like a wave with a large emotion
a *group* of active wills and lusts that flow where they will
ah in the wistful spring twilight
how delightful to walk jostled about in a large crowd
longing for the shadows between labyrinthine city buildings

look at the way this crowd flows
one wave piles upon another
waves make countless shadows the shadows wavering spread and advance
the melancholy and sorrow I have for every one of the people have vanished
  in the shadows there, without a trace
ah with what a peaceful heart I'm walking this street as well
ah merry shadow of my all-encompassing love and innocence
the way I feel, carried away by you, a merry wave, moves me almost to tears.
In the twilight of a pensive spring day
this throng of people swimming under the eaves of buildings
where, and how, is it going to flow
one large shadow on the ground that wraps my sad melancholy
flow of the drifting, innocent wave
ah however far it may be I'd like to walk jostled in this crowd this wave
where the wave goes on the horizon hazy
let us flow only in one just in one Direction.

The Hand Is a Cake

Look at the way it's truly lovely and ample
look at the way it's round and full swelling like a cake
when it comes to the fingers they are svelte and full of *grace*
and just like tiny blue ichthyoids
the way they are gently wafting, I can't stand it
ah I want to kiss the hand
put my mouth on it and eat the whole thing
what clear-cut roundness of the fingertips
look at the air of these mysterious flowers blooming in the valleys between
  the fingers
their fragrance is like musk they look like slightly perspiring peach blossoms.
A woman's fingers ever so elegantly polished
fingers perfectly fitting, snow-white and slender
fingers that hit the *piano* keyboard
fingers for labor that hold a needle and sew silk
the way the fingers work they snuggle up to a shoulder longing for love

let their nailtips touch lightly
the particularly sensitive skin
scratch it with nails lightly
and pretend to press it lightly firmly
the joy of love the body shaking the fingers that tickle violently shrewdly
the standoffish and mean forefinger
tricks of the sly and cheerful small finger
the thumb's plump beauty and truculent brutality
ah I would like to gratefully receive one smoothly polished finger
have it slip into my mouth and suck on it, suck on it forever and ever
the back of the hand is the soft rise of a *waffle*
and the fingers the cold appetite of crystal sugar
ah this appetite
a childlike greedy shameless appetite.

Blue Cat

It's a good thing to love this beautiful city
it's a good thing to love the architecture of this beautiful city
it's a good thing to come to this city and pass bustling streets
in order to long for all the gentle women
in order to long for all the noble lives
cherry trees standing along the streets
aren't innumerable sparrows chirping there as well?

Ah what's asleep in this large city night
is the shadow of a single blue cat
the shadow of a cat that speaks of the sad history of mankind
the blue shadow of the happiness I never stop longing for.
Longing for whatever shadow
I longed for Tokyo even on sleety days, I thought,
but leaning there on a wall in backstreets, and cold,
what dream is this man, a beggar, dreaming?

Moonlit Night

Flapping heavy large wings
ah owner of what a feeble heart.
Look at the white swarms of living things that flow away
when the moon is as bright as a flower gas lamp
look at their silent direction
look at the single intense sentiment that these living things have
on a bright moonlit night like a flower lamp
ah what a sorrowful piteous disturbance of butterflies.

The Feeling of Spring

It's like the smell of the tar of cigarettes from France
smelling it I become dreamy
troubling sad variously complicated emotions of the sky
cold silvery calls of birds
the joy at the coming of spring
is like the clarion of a flute that plays the life of everyone
trembling rare flowers along the path
a single tone that spreads in the heavy rain-wet air
a sensual woman's wail is heard there too
and the spring seems to moisten and swell.
Because spring is come even in deep woods in mountain depths
like earthworms that wriggle even in rotten stumps
my soul sprouts throngs of mushrooms
for example toadstools destroying angles scarlet cups and such
these mushrooms emit a mysterious sensuality
fragrant looking lonesome all day long.

Spring comes spring comes
the joy at the coming of spring is like the clarion of a flute that plays the life of everyone
here and everywhere

throngs of mushrooms sprout toadstools
and growing by a bush and faintly gleaming scarlet cups and such.

Sleeping in a Field

The way this emotion goes on growing
like a tall tree that grows straight up
life's bud grows vigorously.
It has become tall enough to reach the blue sky there, just by stretching
and broad at the chest.
Inhaling the very serene bright spring air
just as birds eat their food
delightful open-mouthed and lovely
how life's buds go on growing.
Grasses and trees, meanwhile
ah how all of them go on growing vigorously.
Lying in a spacious field
I continued to have truly delightful dreams.

A Fly's Song

How close did spring come
spring came very close and let out the fragrance of cherry
children's calls in fields and on hills
I look at spring hills, white clouds flow.
And my heart senses tears
it's the heart that always plays quietly alone
the heart is lonesome
the heart, early in its youthful boyhood, cast a shadow on my life
the gradually enlarging shadow of solitude
the shadow of terrifying melancholy grows.
Now I sit in my room alone
and gaze at the shadow of my fading soul

its sighs are lonesome
and as feeble as a fly that stays
in the spring evening sun that fades quietly
my life roams feebly
my life staying at the windowglass
heard helpless children's sobbing schoolsongs.

So Terrifyingly Melancholy

In a thick stand of trees in a forest
white butterflies and flying all around
they swarm and, swarming, fly about
tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu
out of the fatty opening of green leaves
blink blink blink blink shine their tiny sharp wings
swarm all over and fly about tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu tefu
tefu tefu tefu
ah what a melancholy illusion this is
these heavy hands and feet, this heavy heart
pile upon pile of endlessly sensual material
ah what a beautiful disease this is
at the worn-out nerves' sensuous twilight
I see here the heavy arms and legs women stretched out
the sensuous weight of their worn-out thighs and breasts
their lips red as fresh blood crowd stiflingly piling on here and everywhere
on the lips of my pale corpse
on the forehead head hair groin thighs armpits ankles footsoles
on the right arm on the left arm on the stomach
swarm swarming lecherous lumps of material
coal-black clusters of butterflies madly chasing one another here and
everywhere
ah these terrifying shades on earth
in this forest of sensuous illusion
I gaze at the shadow of melancholy that gradually spread
and my heart flapping its wings

resembles the ugly look of a bird at death
ah this sensation of unbearable sensual sex
ever so terrifyingly melancholy.

Sensory melancholy! Like the sour smell of cherry blossoms, it always makes one feel sensual light in the white, dusty, outdoor air.

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Melancholy Flower-Viewing

Melancholy cherries have begun smelling from a distance
cherry branches spread all around
the sunlight glitters and is exceedingly blinding
I live inside a tightly closed house,
daily eat vegetables eat fish and duck eggs
the eggs and meat have begun rotting
distantly cherry blossoms sour,
the sour smell of cherry blossoms is depressing
now people put on their hats and go out for a walk under the outdoor air
and the sunlight is shining in the distance
nevertheless, I sit in this dark room alone
and send my thoughts under far-off cherry blossoms
send them to the men and women in their youth romping in the fields and hills
ah what a happy life they have there
what a joy is shining
under branches of cherry blossoms that spread all around
young girls dance dances
girls' white-polished arms and legs for dancing
pliantly swimming costumes
ah here and there and everywhere how beautiful curves are entangled
flower-viewers' singing voices are as peaceful as flutes
and reach me with an echo of boundless melancholy.
Now my heart, wiped with tears,
sobs feebly by the confining window;
ah this lone poor heart, longing for what life,

staring at what shadow is it crying
at the end of a beautiful world turned sour and rotten all around
I distantly hear the echo of flower-viewers' melancholy flutes.

Secrets of the Garden of a Vacant House Seen in a Dream

Things planted in the garden of a vacant house are pine trees and such
loquat trees peach trees black pine trees sasanquas cherries and such
prosperous leafy trees branches of leafy trees that spread around
as well under the leaves of those swarming branches the plants that luxuriate continuously
all in all ferns bracken fiddleheads sundews and such
all over the ground they pile up and crawl
the *life* of these blue things
the prosperous lives of these blue things
the garden of the vacant house is always in the plants' shadows and dim
only what faintly flows is a streak of rivulet water
the sound of the running water soughing sadly and low day and night
as well somewhere near the soggy fence
I see the uncanny muculent forms of slugs snakes frogs lizards and such.
And above this secluded world
pale moonlight illuminates the night
moonlight flows in mostly through the planted groves.
Heart intent on thoughts of this late-night deepening ever funereal
my heart leaning on the fence madly plays the flute
ah this secret life where various things are hidden
a world where boundlessly beautiful shadows and mysterious forms pile up one upon another
illuminated in moonlight: ferns bracken branches of pine trees
the eerie lives of slugs snakes lizards and such
ah how I miss the secrets of the garden of this vacant house I often dream of where no one lives
and its deeply suggestive seclusion its mystery ever unsolved.

Black Harmonium

Do play the organ dear woman
you do please put on a black kimono
and sit before the organ
your fingers will crawl on the organ
lightly gently funereal like the sound of snow falling
do play the organ dear woman.

Who is it singing there
who is it listening there affected
ah in this coal-black darkness of melancholy
sucking slimily onto the wall
who is it playing the terrifying gigantic harmonium
the violent emotion of religion its trembling
convulsing pipe organ requiem!
Do pray you sick one
there's nothing to be feared no moment to fear
do play the organ
gently remotely funereally
like pine needles when heavy snow goes on falling
cast bright luster and play
do play the organ
do play the organ dear woman.

Ah in a coal-black long kimono
until the emotion calms itself naturally
you do please play the huge black harmonium
within the walls of a terrifying darkness
you throw yourself intently
you!
Ah what convulsions of violent gloomy emotions.

The Riverside of Melancholy

The soughing sound of rush and reed by the riverside
is lonely
the naturally growing sharp tiny plants floral stems and such
are lonely
I close my eyes
and try to chew the root of some grass
to suck the juice of some grass to suck the bitter juice of melancholy
indeed there's no hope for anything there
life's just a series of meaningless melancholies
rainy season
it's like the soggy raindrops
but ah again rain! rain! rain!
growing there mysterious flora
multitudinous sad winged insects and such
they crawl about melancholy crawl about along the shore
what goes over the soggy rivershore
ah is it the funeral procession of this gleaming life
or is it a gleaming soul's sick wraith
a grass bush near the rivershore where things all rot naturally
the violent smell of some wooden substance gleaming in the rain.

The World of Fantasy the Buddha Saw

It's a flowery moonlit night
where hushed never-ending evergreens pile up
where you see beautiful waves that recede and return again
a road to the longed-for religion is opened
the suspicious saint's dreams are realized.
Yes a streak of love-pity flowing through *his* heart
a fantasy of immortality reflected in *his* eyes
daydreamed happiness and its suspicious shadows and forms
which brightly illuminated fade away again alone
ah to think about him
to feel the country of fantasy that he saw
how it colors the twilight of a lonely life

now when tired I sleep on a chair of solitude for long
the moon shines upon the window of my house as well
the moon is up in the sky like a flower.

Buddha
I love the lotus petal of fantasy that you saw
the fragrance of a feverish flower blooming in pale life
Buddha
ever so flowery and of solitude.

Rooster

Before the eastern clouds come
what's crowing outside the doors of houses is a rooster
it's the voice of mother who quivering her voice long
calls up from lonesome country nature
towotekuu, toworumou, toworumou.

In morning's cold bed
my soul flaps its wings
looking out through a crack in the rain-doors
the landscape in all directions appears brightly glittering
nonetheless before the eastern clouds come
a melancholy steals into my bed
it's the voice of a rooster who over blurred treetops,
calls up from distant country nature
towotekuu, toworumou, toworumou.

Lover
lover
in the shade of daybreak's cold paper-doors
I smell a faint scent of chrysanthemum
like the scent of a sickly spirit
the scent of a slightly rotting white chrysanthemum
lover

lover.

Before the eastern clouds come
my heart wanders about in the shadow of a graveyard
ah something calls to me a painful anxiety
I cannot stand this vermilion air
lover
mother
come quick and turn off the lamplight
I hear the rumbling of a storm blowing over the earth's distant end
towotekuu, toworumou, toworumou.

THE LONELY BLUE CAT

Here's a blue cat. And a willow is being blown in the wind, and over the graveyard the moon is up.

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Miserable Streetlamp

In the rain falling hard
a streetlamp on the road is dripping wet
trashy architecture tilts on the slope squashed and distorted
through frowsy smoky fog
a certain person's destiny wanders white
the person wrapped in a huge overcoat
is like a poor shabby kite
at some architecture he happens upon
he gazes at a waterlogged blue tree growing in its window trembling in the wind and rain
the leaves of the blue tree beckoned him
and made him feel in the sad rainy landscape
something obscene that gave his soul gooseflesh.
And became dripping wet.
The shadow the body life all became dripping wet with pathos.

A Fearful Mountain

I saw the mien of a fearful mountain
it's spurting up smoke into the pitch-dark night sky
it's an eye like a huge spider.
Flickering out its tongue red
it squats flat like a *sea crayfish*.

It's a lonely fearful dark night
that crawled all over the mountainslopes, arms and legs stretched wide
the roaring wind is blowing the grass blowing in a distant sky.
Nature holds its breath hushed
and gradually the mysterious huge mountain form assaults.
Soaring right next to you
the monstrous mien tries to devour.

Song Without Title

Like a naked woman tanned in the South Sea
beyond the wharf with lush summer grass a mysterious red-rusted steamer has come in
fluffy clouds rise white
and the smoke of a cigarette a crewman puffs pleads loneliness.
I was flapping my wings like a quail
and flew about above tall briars
ah clouds ship where did she throw away her anchor for navigation
suffering from a mysterious passion
I walked about searching in the graveyard of silence
being blown in the wind in this clump of grass
it was the quietly rusted mummy of a lovebird.

Sensuous Cemetery

A wind is blowing a willow
where is such a twilighty graveyard landscape.
A slug crawls up the fence
and from the overlook's direction comes the smell of lukewarm brine.
Why did you come here
shadow so gentle pale mysterious as grass
you are neither a clam nor a pheasant nor a cat
and lonesome-looking wraith

from the shadow of your wandering body
in a back alley of a poor fishing village comes the rotten smell of a fish
its intestines melted in the sun gooey and raw-smelling
it's the smell of a sad poignant truly unbearable pathos.

Ah lukewarm as this spring night
you who wander in a vermilion florid kimono
you who are as gentle as a younger sister
it's neither the cemetery's moon nor phosphorescence nor shadow nor truth
and how simply so sad it is.
And so my life and body go on rotting
and in the shadow of the hazy landscape of "Nihilism"
are sensuously yet stickily reclining you see.

Crumbling Flesh

In a field where bats swarmed
I watched a pillar of crumbling flesh
it trembled lonely in the evening darkness
smelled raw like dead-man's-grass that flutters at a shadow
and was as ugly as rotting meat with throngs of maggots crawling on it.
Ah in this landscape that trails shadows
my soul clutches an itchy terror
like a ship that has come from a harbor it has come crossing the islands with
  wraiths in the distance
it's neither wind nor rain
all of it a dark fear clinging to the sufferings of love and lust
and at the dull flute-sound that a snake charmer makes
my crumbling shadow wept lonely.

Raven-Feathered Lady

Gentle raven-feathered lady

you sneak into my attic room
and fill it with musk's sensuous fragrance
you are a mysterious nightbird
perched lonely on a chair made of wood
its beak pecks at the heart its irises brim with quiet tears
nightbird
where does this poignant feeling of love come from
take off your melancholy costume and fly away at once on the night-dew wind.

Green Flute

Through this twilight field
elephants with long ears are lumbering along.
A yellow evening moon wavers in the wind
and here and there hat-like grass leaves flutter.
Are you lonely, young lady!
Here is a small flute and its sound is clear green.
Blow gently into its mouthpiece,
tremble in the transparent sky
and call up your mirage
from the direction of a far-off sea of longings
an illusion seems gradually coming closer.
It is like a headless cat and totters in the grass shadow of a cemetery
I'd just like to die in such a sad evening landscape. Young lady!

Song of a Hermit Crab

As the brine flowed cold
the clam's teeth germ-eaten by pain have melted like vinegar
ah here there are no more friends no more love
looking at wet wraithlike grass on the beach
its roots blurred white in the smoke

are like a lover's lukewarm sigh on a spring night.
From the direction of the vaguely visible offing
a boatman singing a mysterious song of sailing comes the high rhythmic sound of oars.
Dubiously thronging here on the shoreside
rising in a tumultuous heap and crawling about like a shadow
it's a cloud-like image a lonely hermit crab's ghost, you see.

Sad Prisoners

They wear pale *chapeaus*
and walk about dragging the dusky tips of their tails
and look how their gloomy shovels dig the slime.
Ah the grass roots and stubs are all dug out
everywhere's the cloudy dark sunlight.
What a tedious life
making a line like a mysterious funeral going in and out of the shadow of a large building.
It's this lonely shadow like a ghost
in the sad outdoors where glass glitters
everyone wearing a pale paper *chapeau*
coming like unendingly linked snake eggs isn't it a lonely flock of prisoners.

Pussy Willow

On its cold pale face
it has a nobly fragrant moon of grace afloat
moon's shy visage
it talks to your corpse with gentle words.
Ah dew-laden
softly wet pussy willow it's moving in night wind.
Coming here wandering
it sings of ever so many feelings of gladness

it's the lonely lust no one knows and it is lust.
Wet with almost flowing tears
I smear the lips with a splash of blood
ah what longing
clinging to this pale dead soul and toying with it
blown in night wind
wandering dark in the shadow of a pussy willow it's the cemetery's gentle singing voice.

A Melancholy Landscape

It's a landscape as melancholy as a cat
a lonely balloon rises straight up
and see, there's a flicker of personages wearing *linen*.
Already for quite a long while
nobody thinks about a wharf like this.
And from the sea-corner with stunned cranes
many various organism-consciousnesses have faded away.
Besides, the sailing ship gets loaded with cotton
and it's in the offing fluffy and plump thinking isn't it.
These are all indescribable
memories that make your hair stand on end give you gooseflesh.
Ah God there's no way of getting it back anymore
and for worm-eaten recollections like this I'll always be weeping like an infant.

Field Mouse

Where is our happiness?
The more we dig the sand in the mud
the deeper the fountain of sorrow becomes, doesn't it?
The spring wavering in curtains' shadow
has gone away into the distance, rocking on a rickshaw.

Where are our lovers?
We stand on a profuse field and whistle
but the girls of our imagination no longer come, forever.
In tear-stained *melton* pants
I'm walking like a day laborer
ah I have no more hope no more honor no more future.
And irretrievable remorse alone
scurried away like a field mouse.

Dead Person in May

This body prepared live
is prettily funereally sensuously colored
its chest its mouth its face its arms
ah all of it is anointed moistly with unguent and brush.
Gentle dead person in May
thrashing like a snake of green gold
I perceived something viscous
and rubbed and kneaded my skin against the carpet of "Death."

Metempsychosis and Transmigration

Like the wheels that Hell's devils turn
winter days turn, rumbling, lonely
and metempsychosis birds have died in the shadows of sandy fields.
Ah while a gloomy season like this lasts
I climb on an illusory camel
and try to totter off on a saddening journey.
Where is there such a dreary region as this
flocks of aged beggars
countlessly passed behind the ranks
and like vultures swarming onto carrion
grubby little worms swarm over the burned land the impure world.

What a painful sight
everywhere flowers with long necks are in bloom
and they are wavering.
There's nothing to think about thus the twilight will draw near;
gone from a life of loves and solitudes
are the images that give in easily now just faintly visible like ghosts.
Where is the weathercock looking
on a hill of worn soil where the winter days turn rumbling corn leaves are being blown.

A Lonely Life-History

Roly-poly fat
white wasp-waisted mysterious globular image
it has neither ears nor face it's like wild vines that rise vinily into the sky;
summer cloud what an amorphous loneliness
there's no particular faith anywhere no lover I can rely on.
Tottering like a camel
I chewed to bits a coconut's sunburned stone.
Ah from this beggarly life
I've already lost everything;
I've finally come to a path where winds are dead
and dried up on the back of a corn leaf.
What a lonely life-history of mine.

Calendar of Laziness

Several seasons have passed
and cherries of melancholy have already rotted white
a horse carriage runs rumbling in the distance
both sea and country are asleep in the hushed air
what a lazy day
destiny darkens one after another
and the lonely sickly gloom smolders in the shade of willow leaves
there's no more calendar no more memory
I'll leave my nest like a swallow and glide along the edge of a mysterious landscape.
Past love beloved cat
I know one song
and from a distant sky where seaweed burns I will throw a suppurating kiss
ah aside from this sad passion I know no words whatsoever.

Appetite of Quiet Refinement

I walked in a pine grove
and saw a café with a bright mood.
Distant away from city streets
with no one coming to visit it
it is a café in a grove hidden in a dream of recollections.
A virgin with a suggestion of the shyness of love loving
brings me a plate refreshing as daybreak and specially made that's the setup
I leisurely took the *fork*
and ate the omelet fried food and such.
With a white cloud afloat in the sky,

an appetite of ever so quiet a refinement.

In the Horse Carriage

In the horse carriage
I've fallen asleep peacefully.
Beautiful lady
do not shake me awake
we've run through streets with bright streetlamps
passed the countryside of cool green shadows
and before we know it the smell of the sea flutters near where we're going.
Ah with the sound of hoofs clopping
I pursue reality in reality
beautiful lady
until we come to the inn's flowering eaves
do not shake me awake.

Blue Sky

Expressionist School

This long smokestack
is like a woman's round arm
thrust up into the sky
the sky is a clear-blue arc-globe
but has no support of gravity anywhere
this whole landscape is like an elephant
makes you feel an oddly enormous dream.

The Most Primitive Sentiment

The way huge rubber trees luxuriate

deep in this jungle
they're like mysterious elephant ears.
Trailing their shadows on the semidark marsh
and crawling in rapid succession: pteridophytous plants reptiles
snakes lizards newts frogs salamanders and such.

Out of sad midday longings
what did *Adam* recollect?
The primitive sentiment is like a cloud
like boundlessly dear love
and as it floats on the further bank of a distant memory
there's no way to get hold of it.

Weather and Thought

The student crawled up like cattle
out of his gloomy bed
the student flung on a haori
went out and dashed to nature as he saw it.
Nature was bright neat and refreshing
and on top of that had a smell
in the woods at a street corner in a shop stall
everywhere the blue sky flapped and was pulchritudinous
in such buoyant weather
pulchritudinous *cars* and girls ran about.

What I think is
is a thought still more like weather?
The student turned up his tome to the sun
and smelled the smell of happiness for a long time.

Let Us Go to a Village Where There's the Sound of a Flute

When I travel on a running rickshaw
both fields and mountains look indistinct and hazy
willows are blown away in the wind
swallows songs bulbuls fade away in the haze
ah through the rickshaw's running tracks
I see a mysterious expansive landscape ahead
the scenery distantly opens
and makes a lonely melancholy sound on a flute
it's a sentiment one bears and cannot stand.

Go aiming at this odd direction
in the shadow of hazy willows in spring both songs and swallows are blown away
and my rickshaw man is intent don't you see.

On the world of ideas or images

wordlessly eating roadside grass
it's a miserable dejected destiny's cause-and-effect's pale horse's shadow

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Pale Horse

Under the frozen weather of winter's cloudy sky
in so melancholy a nature
wordlessly eating roadside grass
it's a miserable dejected destiny's cause-and-effect's pale horse's shadow
I move in the shadow's direction
and the horse's shadow seems to be watching me.

Ah move fast and leave the place
from my *life's screen*
quickly quickly drag yourself away turn off an illusion like this
I want to believe in my "Will." Horse!
From cause-and-effect's destiny's fixed law's miserable
dry plate of a landscape on which despair has frozen
run away the pale shadow.

Is Thought a Design?

In the shadow of trees in a dense forest
letting a thought walk
the Buddha felt blue-clear nature

saw such a beautiful moonlit night
as would enliven any meditation
and melt into any nirvana.

“Is thought a design?”
stepping on moon shadows
the Buddha asked his gentle heart.

Odious Scenery

While it rains
the view is white-blurred
buildings buildings sloppily wet
I see lonesome ruined countryside
there rotting their emotions
they were living like horses.

I made a round of the house’s walls
and saw moss growing on the house’s walls
their food is very bad
and even their souls resemble the rainy season.

While it rained long
I was in the boring countryside
and saw a light-brownish ghostly shadow
drifting in boring nature.

That is, I saw poverty
in this sloppy rainy air
I saw something drenched wet solitary and very odious.

Warbling Birds

On a day of soft winds
sinking in gloomy meditation
I was walking a path in the depth of a quiet grove with falling leaves.
The weather was clean and clear
and high up in the tops of red pines I saw warbling birds making a commotion
the jolly birds thrust out their chests
and changed the tone of emotion again.
Ah how can I turn today's sensation away
from the depressing meditation and the environment of me in the past
even in my life
where I had lost nothing whatsoever.
Even in my life the only thing I'd lost is pleasantness
ah but I've had pleasantness lost far too long.

Bad Season

Twilight's exhausted season has come
everywhere chambers are dusky
and seem to feel habits' long fatigue
the rain is drenching the roads
and poor tenements are standing in a row.

During a long period of a season like this
my life has been reduced in circumstances
and become terribly poverty-stricken
the furniture is thrown down in one corner
and in wintery dusty hapless sunlight
a fly bumm-bumms levitating on a window.

While a season like this lasts
my lonely visitor
is an aged tottering always powder-smelling lady.
Ah she is my lover in the past
the shadowy shadow of lust of an antiquated memory that wanders about in
the curtains' shadow.

While white rain like this falls
there's no new faith anywhere
poets sing of commonplace thoughts
and the people's old traditions suffer on straw mats
ah this odious weather
season when the sunlight is dull.

A concept of the kind that would make my emotions burn and fester
ah no longer exists anywhere.

Heredity

The human lodges collapsed on the ground
are asleep like huge spiders.
In lonely pitch-dark nature
animals tremble with fear
and threatened by some Dream Demon
are howling sadly pale.
        nowoaaru towoaaru yawaa

The corn leaves blown in the wind
rustle in the dark.
Listen! Be quiet
howling beyond the road
they are dogs' distant howls you see.
        nowoaaru towoaaru yawaa

"Are the dogs diseased? Mother."
"No child
the dogs are starving."

From the direction of glimmers in the distant sky
from the direction of the shadows of trembling phenomena
the dogs surveyed their enemies;
at the end of hereditary instinctive old old memories

felt the figures of their pitiful ancestors.

The dogs' hearts pale from fear
howl for long on the night-dark roads.
nowoaaru towoaaru nowoaarfu yawaa

"Are the dogs diseased? Mother."
"No child
the dogs are starving."

A Face

About the time half-asleep cherries bloom
a white vague face floats
and is watching at the window.
In the shadow of an old old memory
I seem to have met it on a wharf somewhere
but it smells of a violet's morbid melancholy
from the glass window where the outdoor light sparkles
ah it has disappeared into the distance like a rainbow.

I know of one melancholy
pass through *life's* dusky corner
and don't return again eternally.

White Rooster

I am a countryside chicken
flapping my wings in a poor farmhouse garden
going over the fence
I peck at bone-dry small insects.
Ah in this winter day sunlight's shadow
pecking lonesomely at the grass on the dry land

I am a whitish sick rooster
a pitiful sad wing-flapping creature.
I'm a sad countryside chicken
going over the roof
going over the fence
going over the graveyard
at the distant end of the field trembling and shouting
ah I am a broken sundial a countryside whitish rooster.

Hiding Behind Nature

When we passed by a thicket's shadow
we saw swilling forms
swimming on the pitch-dark ground.
That is we saw the shadow of the moon.
When we passed by a clump of grass
we heard a small flute aflutter,
making a sound in the intervals of lonely rustles.
That is we saw the voice of the wind.

Because we are helpless children
with our pitiful sensations
we can see only slight things that have appeared.
We heard the secret whispers of hidden all phenomena
living in vast nature
beyond the far-off hills
and felt the moves of invisible creatures.

We sensed a giant image gradually approaching
like a faint-white shadow of smoke
from the forest shadow of electric light
from the direction of the horizon where evening darkness comes
felt the terror of a demon closing in
that looked like some eerie figure.

With rare words that adults do not know
nature terrified us
trembling like reeds
we wept and shouted in the lonely wasteland.
“Mo-other! Mo-other!”

Sensuous Soul

Lust that begins to wake flowery lively
from the shadows of fluttering
soft grass
spring's emotion at which the heart feels spring
joyful
happy
as if burning up in flames.

To a tired *life's* tasteless day too
and to solitude's dark room too
naturally softly fluttering window light is come
impetus-rising functions quickening
that's the maximum of sensuous musings in the world
all of the hopes full of courage.

Ah these youthful musings
are like the snow that melts in spring sun
like the warmth that gently sprouts
that naturally feels
leaps of sex at which the heart throbs
joyful
happy.

To feel life that cleaves sealed thought at the bottom
and flows quietly
to feel the spring that has come from the marshes' bottom
too laden with melancholy sufferings
welling
bashfully
hesitantly as water grows slightly warm.

Flowery Sentiment

By a late-night quiet field-path
a lonely light is shining
a lonely wind blows and flows
the mountains near here have many trees
broad-leaved oaks, cypresses, beeches, oaks, zelkovas, and such
branches and leaves flourishing they confine themselves gloomily.

From dark woods here and there
from the direction of far-off mountain slopes as well
aiming at a lonely single light
moths swarm and gather I see.
Like a terrifying swarm of locusts
whirling at the light dizzying jostling and dying this squadron of small insects.

Even deep in the mountains far from villages
a single light that shines as night deepens I dream of.
A lonely flowery sentiment I dream of.
Deep in the lamp lonely and flowery
feeling a mysterious anguish of sex
letting their heavy wings flap
moths like *sponge cake* I see
pitiful solitary longing-pressed lives I see.

The lives flit about toward the light
swarm around it and die
ah this bustling sensuous spring night state
in the dewy air
the flowery single light sleeps the lamplight is flowing into nature around it.
Where the shadow of dreams of the flowing pathos is deep
I think of a mystery hard to solve
universal life's instinct's solitary
eternally eternally solitary a sentiment ever so flowery.

One-Sided Love

Going far away from city streets
we sat on grass at the mountaintop
in the sky the landscape being blown away
stone-leeks saxifrages brackens and such
thinly rustle-rustley grow in the grass lot.

You, open the lunch box
and quickly crack the egg please.
My appetite famished for light
burns for the sweet taste of the fruit rind
coiling around your white fingers.

You, why don't you quickly open the basket
and give me a feast of chicken sausages jellies and ham
I'm starved
my lust writhes.

You
you
near your plump arms and legs
tired and thrown out on the grass
near your breast wearing flannel
my attachment heats up climaxes
ah I can't stand this pain this pressure.

Sitting on the highland grass
what are you viewing
your musings flow in the wind
far-off city streets float in the sky
ah I alone exasperated
and above this blue-blue grassland
writhe in sad longings.

Dream

Sitting in the shadow of a bright screen
I listen to your quiet breathing in sleep.
I feel a woman's gentle fragrance
which like the sad smoke from an incense burner
rises and becomes lost uncertain.

Besides you long-haired one
I hear Sleep Demon's natural words
you fall into a deep sleep
I think of your dream
where will this mysterious sentiment
shadowless deep musing go?

Like the faint-white fear in twilight
viewing faint lakewater in the distance
tracing a distance of lonely mountainslope
to an unfamiliar mountain pass in a far view
you are alone lost on the road lost on the road.

Ah longing and seeking for what
where are you trying to go?
Where, where are you trying to go?
Your sentimentality sours at Dream Demon
and like a white chrysanthemum that rotted
brims with a faintly mysterious fragrance.

(The mood of an amorphous dream and its lyricism)

Spring Evening

How joyful to hold this close
the sensuous and yet coquettish air

a twisted *rubber*-like rebounding young body
wrapped in moist lingerie
your breast rises with pulses
arms and legs touch the skin
and pass on the fragrance of a faintly cold gentle tactile sense.

Ah in this melting spring night lamplight
thickly moistly powdered
one white forehead I see
tiny lovely lips I see
a face afloat in a phantom dream I gaze at.

In a spring night's drifting haze
I smell your musings
your musings awake to love
your brightly open black pupils
surprised by a dream
appear suspicious of unfamiliar pleasures.
What passes through a flow of quiet sentiment
and soaks into the hearts of us two
ah look at this peaceful peaceful heart
that has left everything to love, to hope.

How joyful to hold this close
the sensuous and yet coquettish body
in *life's* spring twinkling lamplight
the fragrance of a virgin's soft skin
is like a rose fluttering in a flower garden
signs of lust-melancholy sensual sex
are like cherry blossoms that have bloomed.

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The Army

An impression of a passing army

This weighty machine
presses the ground down solidly;
the ground, powerfully trodden
reacts
and raises swirls of dust.
Look at this giant-weight sturdy machine
passing through the daylight;
it's a dark-blue, greasy
fantastic, stubborn giant-body
a gigantic group's power machine
that presses the ground down solidly.
Thud, thud, crash, crash
crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch.

Wherever this vicious machine goes
the landscape discolors
turns yellow,
the sun depresses in the sky
the Will becomes heavily overwhelmed.
Thud, thud, crash, crash
one, two, one, two.

O this weight-pressing
gigantic pitch-black crowd
just as a wave pushes back and comes back
through the muddied flow of heavy oil
ranks of heated gun barrels pass
innumerable tired faces pass.
Crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch
one, two, one, two.

Under the dark oppressive sky
a heavy machine of steel passes
innumerable dilated pupils pass;
the pupils, open in the heat,
rove vainly, powerlessly
in the shadow of the yellow landscape the terror.
Becomes fatigued
exhausted
dazzled.
    One, two, one, two
    mark time!

O these multitudinous pupils
above the road where dust hangs low
they see the sunlight of melancholy
see the white illusion, the city streets
feelings darkly incarcerated.
    Thud, thud, craunch, craunch
    crunch, crunch, crunch, crunch.

Look at the dark-blue, fantastically greasy
giant-weight sturdy machine
now moving through the daylight;
wherever this vicious machine tramples
the landscape discolors
the air turns yellow
the Will becomes heavily overwhelmed.
    Thud, thud, craunch, craunch
    thud, thump, crash, crash.
    One, two, one, two.

Other Poems and Prose Poems (1913–1939)

Night Train

In the dawn twilight
cold on the glass door a fingerprint
the vague whitening rim of mountains
is as funereal as mercury
yet the travelers still not awake from sleep
tired sighs of lamps alone are clamorous.
When the cloying smell of *varnish*
or the smoke of cigarettes there not there
feels desolate to the tongue ravaged on the night train
how badly the married woman must take it upon herself and grieve.
Have we still not passed Yamashina?
Loosening the metal valve of her air pillow
and secretly letting it breathe the way she feels;
the two of us, sad, nestle to each other
and look out the window of the train near the eastern clouds
and in a mountain village, place unknown,
flowers of columbines blooming quite white.

1913

Cherry Blossoms

Under cherry blossoms many people have gathered,
what do they do for amusement?
I too stood under a cherry tree just to see
but my heart was cold
as petals scattered and fell only tears came down.
How touching
now at the noon of a spring day
when I didn't force myself to stare at sad things.

1913

On a Trip

Though I think I'd like to go to France
France is too far away;
I would at least put on a new jacket
and go on a carefree trip.
When the train takes a mountain path
I would lean on the aquamarine window
and think alone of happy things
on a May morning when daybreak clouds gather
leaving myself to my heart with fresh young grass flaring.

1913

An Impression of Early Summer

Because insect blood flows and seeps in
and everything exhausts its semen
this earth is bright
and from a woman's white fingers
a gold coin slips down onto my hand.
The time is the beginning of May.
Infant trees swim out onto the streets
and, chirping, buds grow out to flare.
Look, the landscape has valiantly flowed in;
floating up distinctly in the blue sky
it really clearly reflects people's shadows.

1914

Moonlit Night

On a bizarre moonlit night
a distorted architecture dream
and a drunken silk hat.

1914

Harmful Animals

Things like dogs by barking
things like geese by being deformed children
things like foxes by glowing during the night
things like tortoises by congealing
things like wolves by dashing are even more extreme
all these things are harmful to the health of the human body.

1915

Dreaming of a Butterfly

In a guest room spreading its large thickset wings,
a butterfly's tiny ugly face and its long feelers
and spreading like paper its ponderous wings' weight.
I lie awake in a white bed.
Quietly I try to trace a memory of a dream
the dream a tale of a piteous lonely autumn evening
a sad tale concerning a setting sun sinking near the water
and a naturally rotting old vacant house.

Dreaming I was weeping like an infant child
an infant child's feeble soul
was weeping in a clump of grass growing in the garden of the vacant
  house like a moist toad.
An infant child's most helpless sentiment
seemed to long for the faint light at the distant water's edge
for a long long time I seemed to be dreaming and weeping.

In a new guest room a butterfly is spreading its wings
is quivering its white thickset paperlike wings.

1917

That Nape Is a Fish

Like an ichthyoid that swims up from a deep valley
the long nape that's always soppy wet and pale
like a smoothly polished marble column
straight and snow-white
and yet bashful nape
this yielding nape's obscene curve
wonderful architecture always painted with powder
the fishy feeling of that powder that stickily sticks to the skin
and what about the spectacle of the ichthyoid swimming in the replaceable collar
ah the mysterious allure that this sensual curve has
I cannot bear that slimy ichthyoid music
pity I'd like to turn myself into something like a water weed
and quickly cling to this wondrous architectural column
quick quick leaving myself to the *Nymph* in my insoluble dream.

1917

The Gray Road

The road where come evening I take a walk
alone I walk head down
the road all too lonely lying under the gray sky
pity in my dreams these days a poor maiden
with my heart in love with this maiden's figure I walk
the maiden her body wrapped in a light-blue long shawl
her shoulders look slender emaciated piteous
ah under this lonely gray sky
our hearts talk in a poor manner soppy with dew of wildflowers heavily
  come close to each other.
Lover,
do you hear thunder rumble in that distant sky
do you deign to listen to the howls of turbulent waves swirling up in the sky
  over there?

Lover,
standing by the roadside on this semidark winter day
my hands smell of a chrysanthemum that has soured,
smell of desolate illness and depression.
Ah my past which is utterly unbearable and miserable,
long long shadow of solitude
now crossing over this winter-day tree-lined street
I survey the cemetery of a distant cloudless sun
sniffing the faint remnant of last night's dreams
I look at the rim of the mountain in lonely daybreak.
Lover lover.
Lover
poor maiden in my dreams who does not say a word,
the two of us always tightly leaning against each other
feeling your mysterious smell of musk
and we'll go visit the cemetery in the valley deep in the mist won't we.

1918

Commerce

Commerce is something like a flag
ships that come from distant foreign lands over the seas of trade
at times carrying cotton and agate
*matroos** of alien lands who walk from one island to another of the South
Seas Asia.
Flags of commerce flaunt in nations of the earth
blowing in the wind everywhere in the territories of freedom.
Merchants
your loads have been loaded in the port
and destiny has whistled for setting sail.
Shippers
pilots
now before a terrible storm don't you see the clouds rising rotundly
don't you see how eerie demons in wild frenzy
in no time the masts are shattered
sharply the whistle is screamed at
and see pale dead fish that float up shipside.
Ah the sun is sinking
what are the ominous seagulls sadly wandering in the offing singing?
Merchant
return again to the port where coconut leaves luxuriate
reload your new cotton and agate
wandering by the mysterious ports of Asia
above the flags of commerce flaunting high in the blue sky
ah I see that lonesome-looking ghost ship float.
Merchant! You are a person of adventure and freedom
you know this insoluble mysterious melancholy, like a white cloud.
Commerce is something like a flag.

1922

*A Dutch word meaning “sailor.” Pronounced madorosu, it became a Japanese word.

Farmer

Dugong-like farmer,
on the countryside roof grass grows, the supper smoke drifts faintly white in the sky.
Have you forgotten cultivation fat farmer
famine pressing on the countryside the coarse walls of the winter farmhouse have completely frozen.
and in the shadow of the miniature shrine where the lamp is faint
the ghosts of ancestors are trembling as if cold.

These fellows who like piteous beasts
are possessed by the fear of a mysterious destiny
their stomachs filled with vegetables their dusky nerves have a nimbus.
In the poor countryside exposed to winter cold
slow-witted dugong-like farmer.

1922

A Matroos Song*

Looking like a dimwit seabird
I'll pass through the city district of the port where tiles and cobbles lie about.
Broken wagons forming a line
helter-skelter conical crowdedness is coming don't you see.
Floats piled upon floats
how dirtily crowded with humans and beasts the streetlife is
I look and beyond the antiquated fingerboard of a large clock
winter's lonely seascape is weeping don't you see.
Letting the tears flow on a roadside stone
I'll be walking like a Chinese my pigtail dangling on my back.
Where does the dark ray of light like this come from?
Or hanging a signboard for *Artist* under the eaves of a barber or a tailor
poor jut-out windows of vegetable dishes and wooden inns are tilting
why projecting such a poor photograph of "time"?
I no longer have even a place to go other than this
as soon as I can I'll turn at the pier with a stone fence
and go back to the sailboat far in the offing
and untie the anchor of oblivion to go look for a port where the records
  gradually fade away.

1923

*A Dutch word meaning "sailor." Pronounced madorosu, it became a Japanese word.

Firing a Cannon

Wearing a flabby trench coat
I am pulling a cannon out of a grass bush.
There's nothing particular I'd fire at
I'll stuff gunpowder into my intestines
and remain bloated half rising like a toad.
And opening my eyeballs like a conch shell's,
face pale,
I'll be looking at the expansive sea and land, you see.
Among the fellows around here I have no friend
and I'm likely to look like a rotten monster of clam-flesh at best.
In this indolent son's room
not even the peaceful early-spring light shines in
and I just lie about in my gloomy bed.
The voices of society that curse me laughing at me
there isn't a single person who comes to console me
and I can't even hear a gentle lady's singing voice.
Accordingly my eyeballs opened even wider
and have turned into oddly transparent glassballs.
There's nothing particular I'd eat
I'll stuff gunpowder into my illusory intestines
pull out the antiquated cannon into a lonely field
and will be firing *dooboom dooboom*.

1923

*Yoshiwara**

Enclosed in tall board fences
it's a shadowy gloomy district.
Nevertheless in a vacant lot a ditch flows
trees grow
and everywhere the smell of white carbolic acid.
Yoshiwara!
Like a frog lying dead on an embankment
it's a pleasure zone, its belly exposed white.
In the sad enclosure of board fences

I heard the woman I fancy weeping
all night long.
Then she ate indigestible noodles
and was lying under a sooty electric lamp.
"Come again, please!"

Even on a day of cloudy weather of despair
a photograph is posted on the brothel billboard.

1927

*A famous brothel district in Edo whose origins go back to 1617 when prostitutes from three different places were gathered in one place.

Waves and Darkness

Darkness is like waves. On the surface of the sea where life is desolate, they roll in and break, break and roll in again. Ah waves of lust, waves of will, waves of evil thoughts that roll out and rise again. Waves, waves, waves, waves, waves of dark melancholy with nothing special to be said about it. Indeed, this lonely view always repeats its depressingly monotonous echoes on the dark surface of the sea under a cloudy sky. Let us then pass by the seashore, let us go step on the footprints on the dunes that recede into the distance. Let us meditate on the eternal time of nature, of the ocean, that reflects in the Buddha's lonely clock. Now on the surface of the crepuscular sea, watching the whitish waves of darkness that roll in and break, break and roll in again. Hearts on the beach where everything is so sad, crumbling with melancholy.

Driving a Panting Horse

On Sunday morning, you run a light, svelte carriage into a tree-lined street out in the suburbs with a pair of fleet steeds, their skin glossy. Isn't there a landscape the exact opposite of this? Under a heavy cloudy sky, a stalled cart. Isn't there an oppressive landscape where even while the driver gets anxious and exasperated, his rotten horse doesn't move a bit? Look, thinkers. So many days of ours with depressing weather of the kind where before a thought whose content is all prepared to go, the words vacillate and hover and don't move ahead.

From an Auroral Region

I'd like to be sitting like a seal on the ice where you can see the aurora, absently, "forgetting one's self." There the eternity of time passes by. There in the auroral region without day or night, where rays of light like twilight faintly turn on and off, dully, sadly. Ah I'd like to be sitting on the ice in that distant North Pole, absently like a seal. Forgetting myself eternally, eternally, I'd like to be looking at a sad illusion that floats on the faintly dark sea of meditation.

The Riverbank of Desolation

Near an old station, on the shore of a river with willows, what is he trying to catch? Until in time the twilight of life comes, for such a long time, with a fishing pole without a hook…? "No," replied the Chinese. "Watch how beautifully the fish run. Watch how quietly the water flows. How is it that you don't like this quietude? The brilliant sensibility of this landscape? I'd rather hope that I will *not be able to catch* anything all day. Therefore, sit on the sunny riverbank of desolation, and don't disturb my environment in any way."

Discarding Memory

Coming back from a forest, I took off my hat and discarded it. Ah, memory. Memory terribly torn apart. Memory that had rotted in miserable, muddy water. My hat trembling on the road in a lonely rainy landscape. I discarded it behind me and walked on.

Pathos! Don't You Ever Return?

The student-servant went to town, passed under a factory, and heard the resounding sound of a locomotive. In a street where a fire-stoker ran, wheels turned, and a flock of crows noisily called to one another, a single Chinese fiddle was quickly packed, loaded on a freight train, and went through the gate of the customs house, toward a warehouse in the port.

Late October. The student-servant, trying to eat his meal, heard music surreptitiously approach the withered lawn in the shadow of the warehouse and chirp like a cricket.

—Pathos, don't you ever return?

The Octopus That Does Not Die

In a water tank of a certain aquarium, for a long while, a starving octopus was kept. In the underground dim rock shadows, pale crystal ceiling rays of light always drifted sadly.

Everyone, all of the people, had forgotten about this dim water tank. It was thought that the octopus had died long ago. And only rotten seawater, in the dusty sunlight, always stagnated in the glass window of the tank.

Nevertheless the animal did not die. The octopus had been hiding in the rock shadows. And when he woke up, in the unhappy, forgotten tank, for days on end he had to endure terrible starvation. When there was nothing to eat anywhere and food completely ran out, he tore off his legs and ate them. First, one leg. Then, another. Then, finally, when all of them were utterly gone, this time he turned his body inside out and started to eat a part of his intestines. Little by little from one part to another. In neat order.

Thus the octopus finished eating all of his body. Epidermis, brains, stomach. Every part, leaving nothing at all. Completely.

One morning, when the keeper happened to come by, he found the water tank empty. Behind the clouded dusty glass, transparent indigo seawater and willowy seaweed were moving. And in no corner of any rock was the creature visible any more. The octopus had actually, utterly vanished.

Nevertheless the octopus did not die. Even after he disappeared, he still was eternally alive *there*. In the antiquated, empty, forgotten water tank of the aquarium. Eternally—most likely through many centuries—an animal with a certain horrible deficiency and dissatisfaction was alive, invisible to the human eye.

Mirror

Even if you go behind the mirror, “I” won’t be there. Young lady!

In Nature

Midway up a barren mountain, I saw a single giant ear, keeping silent as a wall.

House

A human being living in a house is a sad landscape on the earth.

Father

Father is eternally tragic.

The Feeling of Material

Suppose a mechanical man has a feeling? It will be nothing but boundless sorrow.

The Terror of Suicide

Suicide itself is not terrifying. What I think about suicide is not the pain at the moment of death but the irretrievable regret at the instant suicide is committed. Now I am preparing to jump out the window of a tall building, on the fifth floor. I've already written a will, and all the preparations are over. Come! Close your eyes, and jump! And I jump. My feet finally leave the window and my body is thrown into the air.

But then, the moment my feet have left the window, abruptly a different thought comes to me, like a flash of electric light. Then, for the first time, I know *clearly* the significance of life. What a foolhardy thing! I should never, never have chosen death. The world is bright, the future is shining with hope. I decidedly do not want to die. Don't want to die. But the feet have already left the window and my body is falling straight. Below on the ground is hard pavement. White concrete. Blood-splattered skull! An unavoidable decision!

Because of the terror of this fantasy, I always turn pale like a white sheet. Nothing, nothing is more terrifying than this imagining. Worse, it isn't possible that this can't actually happen. If those who have already committed suicide and are dead were to become alive once again and speak, they would probably talk of the actuality of this. They are all regretting ghosts in their graves. I think about this a hundred times and am still terrified, and I shudder even in my dreams.

A Madman Watching a Clock

In one room of some madhouse there was a man who sat on a chair all day, doing nothing but stare at the hands of a clock every day. Here was probably the most bored human being in the world, who didn't know what to do with "time," or so I thought. But the reality was the opposite, as the director of the house explained to me. This unhappy person thinks life is constant activity. He doesn't want to waste a single moment of his life, and lest he squander valuable time, he's staring at the clock like that, every day. Say something to him, and he'll angrily bark, "Shut up! Now another second of my valuable time passes. *Time is life! Time is life!*"

The Hirose River

The Hirose River flows white.
Time passes and all illusions must fade away.
Wanting to catch my *life*,
one day in the past I cast my line in the river,
but ah that happiness was too far away
and I didn’t see tiny fish even in a flash.

Cat Town

—*Roman* in the Style of a Prose Poem—

You may smash a fly but the fly's "thing-in-itself" will not die. You'd simply have smashed the phenomenon called a fly.

—*Schopenhauer*

1

The allure of travel gradually faded away from my *roman*. Once upon a time my heart danced just by imaging any of its symbols, a train, a steamship, towns of unknown foreign lands. Nonetheless, my past experiences taught me that travel is no more than the simple "movement of the same thing within the same space." No matter where you go, you find the same kinds of people live, repeating the same kinds of monotonous lives, in the same kinds of villages or towns. In any small town in the countryside, the merchant is fiddling with his abacus at his storefront, looking out at the whitish street all day, the public servant is smoking in his office, thinking about things like vegetables in his lunch box, as they live each tasteless, monotonous day the same way, day after day, watching their lives gradually grow old. The allure of travel came merely to project in my tired heart the image of an endlessly bored landscape like a Chinese parasol tree that grows in some vacant lot, making me feel a tasteless hatred and leeriness for human life in which identical rules repeat themselves no matter where you turn. In short, I lost interest in any kind of travel, the *romance* of it.

For a long time I've continued only mysterious travels through my own unique method. In these travels of mine I let myself go in the only moments where human beings can fly outside time and space, outside cause and effect, that is, that free world that subjectivity constructs, skillfully taking advantage of the borderline between dream and reality. That said, I no longer will need to talk a lot about my secret. Except, I might just add that in my case, instead of opium which requires you to go to a great deal of trouble for utensils and equipment and which, at the same time, is hard to get in Japan, I most often used morphine and cocaine, which you can use by simple injection or orally. As for the countries I traveled in the ecstatic dreams induced by narcotics, I don't have enough room to detail them here. But in most cases I traveled in marshy areas swarming with frogs or a coastal region, near the Arctic, where penguins are. In the landscapes of those dreams, all colors were in brilliant primary hues, and both sea and sky were transparent pale-blue like glass. Even after I woke from them, I remembered these *visions*, often experiencing eerie illusions in the real world.

These travels on drugs, however, terribly harmed my health. Every day I grew emaciated, turned paler, and my skin grew decrepit and stagnant. I began to pay attention to my own care. And in the midst of a walk for exercise, one day suddenly I discovered a new way of satisfying my odd travel addiction. Following the advice the doctor specified for me, I would walk about in an area four to five thousand yards away from home (for thirty minutes to an hour) every day. That day, too, I was, as always, walking in the usual walking area. The route I took was always the same. But that day I, for some reason, passed through an alley unknown to me. As a result, I completely lost track of my route, messing up the directions. From the start I've been a human being whose sensory functions that intuit magnetic directions have something remarkably deficient. In consequence, I don't remember roads well, and in a place unfamiliar to any extent I easily get lost. In addition, I have the habit of falling into meditation while walking on the road. An acquaintance may greet me without my noticing it at all; at times I become lost in my neighborhood, very near my house, and ask for directions, making people laugh. Once I walked around the house where I'd lived for a long time, round and round along the fence fifty, sixty times. Because of the error in my directional sense I could not for the life of me find the entrance to the gate that was right in front of my eyes. My family said I was no doubt duped by a fox. The state of being duped by a fox must be what psychologists call a disorder in the semicircular canals. This is because, according to scholars' theory, the special function of sensing directions is the effect of those semicircular canals.

Such extraneous matters aside, I was lost and confused; making a random guess, I hurried along the road, trying to go in the direction of my house. And after making several rounds of a suburban area with mansions with many trees, I surprisingly came out on a bustling street. It was a beautiful town in some place utterly unknown to me. The street was swept clean and the pavement was wet with dew. Every store was neat and fresh, and each show window with polished glass had a variety of rare merchandise arranged in it. Near the eaves of a café a flowering tree luxuriated, adding a tasteful touch of light and shadow to the town. The red postbox at the crossroads was also beautiful, and even the young woman in the cigarette store was bright and delicate like an apricot. I had never seen a town with such deep feeling. Wherever in Tokyo was such a place? I had forgotten the geography. But by calculating the time, I knew for certain, without any doubt, that it was in the neighborhood of my house, that it was in the usual area for my walk, only about thirty minutes away

on foot, or somewhere near it. But how was it possible that such a town existed so close, utterly unknown to me?

I felt I was dreaming. It seemed to me it was not a real town but a town in a picture projected on a screen by a magic lantern. But at that instant, my memory and common sense were recovered. I looked again, and it was a suburban town near my place that I knew very well, unattractive and run-of-the-mill. As always, the postbox stood at the crossroads, and in the cigarette store a young woman with some stomach ailment was sitting. And in the show windows of the stores was the usual merchandise on display that had gone out of fashion, dusty, yawning. The eaves of the café were decorated with an arch of artificial flowers fit for the countryside. It was just the usual, boring town in which everything was as I knew it. In a single instant the entire impression had changed. And this magical, mysterious change was caused only because I'd been lost on my way and had confused the direction. The postbox that usually was at the southern edge of the town seemed to be in the north, at the entrance from the opposite end. The houses lining the street, which were usually on the left side, had moved to the opposite, right side. And this simple change had made the entire town appear a rarity, something new.

In that unknown, illusory town I was looking at the sign of a certain store. I thought I'd seen exactly the same picture of the sign somewhere. And the moment my memory was restored, all directions were reversed. The street that until then had been on the left side was on the right side, I discovered, and I, who had been walking north, was walking south. That instant, the needle on the magnetic compass turned round, and the spatial positions of east, west, south, and north were entirely reversed. At the same time, the entire universe changed, the feelings of the phenomenal town became something utterly different. That is, the mysterious town I'd seen before had actually existed in the reverse space of the universe where the magnetic compass was turned upside down.

After this accidental discovery, I often deliberately got directions confused to travel in this mysterious space. These travels were particularly convenient for my purpose because of my deficiency I've described before. But even those with an ordinary, healthy directional sense must have seen at times this special space in their own experiences. For example, you are on a train late at night on your way home. When it leaves the station, the train at first runs on the rail straight from east to west. But after a while, you wake from your dozing dreams. And you begin to realize that the direction of the advancing train had

been reversed before you knew it, with the train running in the opposite direction, from west to east. In your rational thinking, you know it isn't possible. Yet as a sensory fact, the train is certainly going the other way, distancing itself from your destination. At such a time, look out the window. The stations and landscapes on the way that are so familiar to you have now entirely, fascinatingly changed, presenting an utterly different world of which you don't have a fragment of memory. But when you finally reach your destination and get off on the usual platform, for the first time you wake from your dream and recognize the real, correct direction. And once you realize this, the abnormal landscapes and things you saw turn into unattractive, ordinary, familiar, and banal things. That is, you see the same landscape first from its reverse side, then from its front side, according to normal custom. Nothing contains a greater metaphysical mystery than the fact that a single thing presents two separate sides if you change the direction of your eyes, that a single phenomenon has a hidden "secret side." A long time ago, when I was a child, I would look at a framed painting hanging on the wall and become obsessed with the thought: What kind of world is secretly hidden behind that framed landscape? I often removed the oil painting to peer at its back. This question I had as a child remains for me, an adult today, as an unsolvable mystery.

The story I narrate next provides a key that suggests an answer to my mystery. If the reader is able to hypothesize from my mysterious tale a certain four-dimensional world—the reality behind the landscape—that hides behind things and phenomena, the entire tale will be *real*. But if you are unable to hypothesize it, the facts that I actually experienced will in the end be no more than a hallucination of the incoherent *decadence* of a poet whose central nerves are damaged by morphine addiction. At any rate, I'll muster my courage to write it down. Except, not being a novelist, I don't know how to amuse the reader with embellishments and schema. All I can do will be to write a report on the facts I experienced.

2

At the time I was staying at the hot spring K in the Hokuetsu region. In the mountains near the end of September, past the equinox, it was already well into the autumnal season. All the resort people from the metropolis had gone home, with only a handful seeking a hot-spring cure quietly staying on to look after their illnesses. The shadows of the autumn sun were slowly growing deeper, and in the desolate courtyard of the inn were dead leaves of trees scattered about. In a flannel kimono I would take a daily walk in the mountain behind, idly passing the days.

A little distance from the hot spring there were three small towns. They were not so much towns as small congregations of farmhouses more properly called villages, but one of them was really a snug rural town selling an array of daily necessities, with even a couple of urban-style eateries. From the hot spring a road directly lead to each of these towns, and every day a horse carriage traveled back and forth on a set schedule. A small light railway connected to the busiest town, U. I often went to U Town by rail, to shop, or drink at a joint with barmaids. But my true joy was on the way to the town. The cute, toylike train ran, snaking through deciduous woods and between mountains with a view of a valley.

One day I got off the train midway to walk to U Town. I wanted to take a leisurely stroll alone, over a mountain path which had a good view. The road lay more or less alongside the railway as it followed an irregular path through the woods. Here and there autumn flowers were in bloom, there was clay exposing its shiny flesh, and there were trees cut and laid aside. Looking at the clouds floating in the sky, I was thinking of an old folktale transmitted in that mountainous region. The region, which was on the whole culturally undeveloped and wrapped with taboos and superstitions of a primitive people, had in fact a variety of legends and folktales many people there still seriously believed. Indeed, the maids at my inn, as well as the people from neighboring villages taking the hot-spring cure, told me various stories with feelings of fear and disgust. According to what they said, the residents of one village were possessed by a dog deity and the residents of another by a cat deity. Those possessed by a dog deity lived by eating only meat, and those possessed by a

cat deity only fish.

These people called such outlandish villages “possessed villages” and avoided all intercourse with them, hating and detesting them. The people of “possessed villages” choose a dark, moonless night once every month to hold a rite. The rite is utterly invisible except to themselves. On a rare occasion some outsider might see it, but such a person, for some reason, keeps silent about it. They have a unique magical power and have a huge amount of assets, sources unknown, stashed away somewhere. And so forth.

After telling me such stories, they would add: In fact, a village of that kind existed near this hot spring until just recently. Its residents have scattered away someplace now, you can guess why, but they must be continuing their secret group life. For an unmistakable proof of this, we know someone who saw their Okura (the identity of the Demon). In the talks of these people, there was a strain of stubborn assertiveness unique to the farmers. Regardless of my wishes, they tried to impose on me their own superstitious fears and their realities. But I had a different reason to listen to their stories with interest. Village taboos of this kind, which are found in many parts of Japan, can probably be linked to the descendants of the people who had as their ancestors’ tribal deities those who had moved here from foreign countries or had naturalized and whose customs and habits were different. Or, to make a more credible speculation, they may be linked to the villages of “hiding Christians.” But in this universe there are a great many things that are unknown to mankind. As Horace said, the intellect knows nothing. It turns everything into common sense and provides vulgar interpretations to mythologies. And the hidden meaning of the universe is always above vulgarity. Therefore, all philosophers must surrender to the poet when they arrive at the end of their intellectual exploration. Only the universe that the poet intuits far above the common senses is the true metaphysical reality.

Deep in such thoughts, I was walking along the autumn mountain path. The narrow path went on to lead into the depths of the woods. The railway that I had counted on as the only road sign to my destination was nowhere visible. I had lost track of my way.

“A lost child!”

What came to my mind when I awoke from my meditation was these helpless words. I suddenly became uneasy and flustered as I started to look for the path. I turned back and tried to return to the original road. In doing so I lost my sense of geography and found myself mired in a maze that seemed to lead every

which way. The mountain became deeper, and the small path disappeared into thorns. Useless time passed. I didn't even meet a single woodcutter. My unease increased. As agitated as a dog, I walked about trying to sniff out the road. And finally I found a narrow trail with the clear footprints of men and horses. Paying attention to the footprints, I gradually descended toward the foot of the mountain. No matter to which side of the mountain I might go down, I'd be relieved as long as I could get to a place with houses.

Several hours later I reached the foot of the mountain. And, truly, I discovered an unforeseen, unexpected human world. There, instead of poor farmhouses, was a beautiful, bustling town. Once, an acquaintance of mine who had traveled on the Siberian Railway told me how, after running through the vast, barren, uninhabited plains on the train day after day after day, a small station where the train stopped at long last looked like the busiest city in the world. My impression in this case was a comparable surprise. Toward the lower flatland spread innumerable houses of different architectural designs, with towers and tall buildings shining in the sun. I could hardly believe that such a respectable city existed beside such a godforsaken mountain.

Feeling as if I were watching a magic lantern, I slowly approached the town. And in the end I went into the lantern myself. Out of a certain narrow alley, I passed through a passageway as dark as the Buddha's Womb into the center of a bustling main street. My impression of the city streets reflected in my eyes was very special and rare. In each block the stores and buildings were designed with aesthetically different feelings, yet the town as a whole formed a comprehensive beauty. Also, it was not consciously done but was an accidental result from rust gathering through the ages. It had ancient elegance and depth and spoke of the town's old history of the past and its residents' long memories. The streets were generally narrow, even the main street only four or five yards wide at best. The other smaller streets were jammed between the eaves, forming narrow, crisscrossing alleys. They turned and twisted like a maze, sometimes going down a cobbled street, sometimes going through a dark tunnel that formed beneath bay windows that jutted out from second floors. As in a town in a southern land, luxurious flowering trees grew here and there, with wells near them. Everywhere the shadows were deep, and the town as a whole was as moist and quiet as the shade of green foliage. There was a row of brothel-like houses, and from somewhere deep within the courtyard came the sound of quiet, leisurely music.

Along the main street many houses were Western-style, with glass windows.

In front of a barbershop a pole with red and white stripes stuck out and written on its painted sign was *Barbershop*. There was an inn, and there was a cleaner. At the crossroads of the town was a photo studio, and its glass-made house like a weather station reflected the blue sky of an autumn day in a somewhat lonesome fashion. At the front of a clock-and-watch store sat its bespectacled proprietor silently, intently at work.

The streets were bustling with people, crowded. Despite that, there was no noise whatsoever; it was all elegantly quiet, forlorn, and hushed, with a suggestion of deep sleep. This was because, except for the people who were walking, not a single car or horse that made noise passed by. Not only that, but the crowds themselves were quiet. Both men and women all appeared refined and reserved, cultivated and unhurried. In particular, the women were beautiful; in addition to being ladylike, they were *coquettish*. Whether shopping in a store or talking on a street, they were all well-mannered, speaking in a well-modulated, low, quiet voice. Their talk and conversation had the air of not so much listening with the ear as exploring meanings with some sort of soft feeler, through the touch. In particular, the women's voices somehow had the sweet, entrancing charm of caressing the surface of the skin. All the phenomena and personalities went back and forth like shadows.

The first thing I noticed was that the *atmosphere* of this town as a whole was formed artificially with extremely sensitive attentiveness. Not just the buildings but the entire nervous system that formed the town's mood was focused solely on a certain important aesthetic design. Attention was given to every corner lest the slightest stirring of the air break any of the aesthetic rules, such as contrast, balance, harmony, and parallelism. Furthermore, because the formation of its rules for beauty required an extremely complicated differential calculation, every nerve of the town was quivering with extraordinary tension. For example, even some falsetto slightly out of tune was prohibited because it would break the harmony. Whether walking on the street, simply moving a hand, eating or drinking something, contemplating, or selecting the design of a kimono, *delicate* attention always had to be given to keep in harmony with the atmosphere of the town and not destroy the contrast and balance with the surroundings. The entire town was like a dangerous, fragile building formed of a thin sheet of glass. The slightest loss of balance would destroy the whole house, shattering the glass into smithereens. To maintain its stability, each of its columns was required to be assembled with subtle mathematical logic, the whole structure being supported, barely, by the resultant contrast and balance.

What was frightening besides was the truly real fact that structured this town. A single careless mistake would mean its collapse and death. The nerves of the entire town were taut with that apprehension and terror. The design of the town that appeared aesthetic was not that for a simple matter of preference but hid a more terrifyingly acute problem.

When I noticed this for the first time, I suddenly became uneasy and felt the pain of my nerves taut in the electrifying air that surrounded me. Both the unique beauty of the town and its hushed, dreamy quietness became eerie in a hushed sort of way as if signals were being exchanged inside some frightening secret. A single unknown, vague presentiment busily rushed about in my heart, in the pale color of terror. All my senses were liberated, and I could perceive completely, assuredly, the minutest colors, smells, sounds, tastes, and even the meanings of things. The air surrounding me filled up with a corpse-like odor, and the atmospheric pressure kept climbing by the second. What phenomenized there was surely some evil omen. Surely now, something extraordinary would happen! Had to happen!

The town hadn't changed a bit. The streets were as thronged as before, refined people walking quietly, noiselessly. Somewhere in the distance there were consecutive low sorrowful sounds like the rasping of a Chinese fiddle. Mine was a presentiment whose content was terrible anxiety, like that of someone who, in some place, alone, mystified and suspicious, is watching a town which, just a moment before a great earthquake strikes, remains as normal as normal can be. Now, accidentally, a man falls. And the carefully constructed harmony is destroyed, throwing the entire town into chaos.

In my own presentiment I became exasperated like someone who, conscious of a dream in his nightmare, is desperately struggling in his effort to wake from it. The sky was transparently blue and clear, and the density of the electrified air kept increasing even faster. The buildings began to become uneasily distorted, growing thin as if ill. Here and there, towerlike things became visible. The roofs, too, became eerily slender, looking oddly bony and deformed like the legs of a skinny chicken.

"Now!" I shouted despite myself, my heart pounding with terror, when a tiny, black, ratlike animal scurried away through the center of town. In my eyes it made a truly clear image. For some reason I had an abnormal, abrupt impression of something that threatened to break the entire harmony.

That instant. All phenomena came to a sudden halt, and a bottomless silence laid itself down. I didn't know what it was. But the next instant, a frightening

abnormality, which no one could imagine and which was the most bizarre in the world, phenomenized. I looked and the streets of the town were swarming with huge crowds of cats. Cat, cat, cat, cat, cat, cat, cat. No matter where I looked, there were only cats. And from the windows of houses the cats' whiskered faces were floating out, enlarged, as if they were pictures in picture frames.

I shuddered, my breathing almost stopped, I was about to keel over. Is this not a world where human beings live but a town where only cats live? What on earth has happened? How can I believe this phenomenon? I'm sure something is wrong with my brain now. I am seeing an illusion. Or else I've gone mad. My own universe has lost its balance of consciousness and has collapsed.

I became afraid of myself. I strongly felt some frightening final destruction was pressing very close upon me. A shudder flashed through the darkness. But the next moment I recovered my consciousness. Quietly calming myself down, I opened my eyes once more and looked again at the truth of the fact. By then all those enigmatic cats had vanished from my vision. There was nothing abnormal about the town, and the windows were agape, *VACANT*. There was nothing in the streets, only the roads of boredom whitening. Nothing like cats were visible anywhere. And the emotional state had completely changed. Banal commercial houses lined the streets, and tired dusty people of the kind you'd see in any countryside were walking about the dry town in daylight. The mesmerizing mysterious town had wholly disappeared and, as if you'd turned over a card, a completely different world had emerged. What actualized itself here was the usual banal rural town. Furthermore, it was the usual U Town I'd known so well. There the usual barbershop, with its chairs lined up for customers who didn't come, was watching the street in daylight, and on the left side of the rundown town the clock-and-watch store that couldn't sell its wares was yawning, its door closed as usual. Altogether it was a monotonous country town just as I'd known it, with nothing out of the ordinary about it.

When my consciousness had become that clear, I understood everything. Stupid of me, I had once again suffered the usual sensory disease, "the loss of semicircular canals." I'd lost my idea of direction ever since I was lost on the path in the mountain. I thought I'd gone down the opposite side, but had come back down to U Town. And I had wandered into the center of town from a direction totally different from the station where I normally got off the train. As a result, I had looked at all the impressions from the opposite side, from a position where the magnetic compass was flipped upside down, and had seen

another, four-dimensional universe (the reverse side of the landscape) where the upside and downside, the four directions, the front and back, and the right and left were all reversed. That is, to interpret the matter with a run-of-the-mill common sense, I'd been "duped by a fox," as they say.

3

My story ends here. But my mysterious question begins anew here. The Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi once turned into a butterfly in his dream and when he awoke asked himself, mystified: Am I the butterfly in the dream or am I the one here now? This ancient enigma hasn't been solved by anyone in thousands of years. Is the illusory universe what someone duped by a fox sees? Or is it something intellect's common sense sees? When it comes to such things, does the real world in metaphysics exist on the other side or this side of the landscape? Probably no one can answer this enigma. And yet what still remains in my memory is that puzzling outside-human town, that spectacle of a monstrous Cat Town where images of cats were vividly projected in the windows, under the eaves, and on the streets. My living perception can still re-create that frightening impression and make me clearly see it, graphically in front of my eyes, even though fifteen to sixteen years have already passed since.

People sneer at my story, saying that it's a poet's sickly illusion, a phantasmagoric illusion too silly for words. Yet I surely saw a town where only cats lived, a town where cats in the guise of human beings thronged its streets. Regardless of ratiocination or argument, to me nothing is more absolute and doubtless than the fact that I *saw* it in some part of the universe. In the face of all kinds of derisions of all the many people, I still firmly believe in my mind that that unique village on the Japan Sea of which oral legend has handed down, the town where only cats' spirits live, must surely exist somewhere, in some part of the universe.